

March 2001

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



## Newsletter

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

### Growth of the Nursery

#### A Special Colour Edition

Scenes showing some of the expansion work that has been carried out at the Warrandyte State Park nursery. 35,000 plants propagated by FOWSP volunteers from locally-collected seed will be planted in Warrandyte this year!!



## JACARRI ECO-COTTAGE

### Goongerah

By Lee & Geoff Speedy

Experience East Gippsland's ancient forests from an environmentally-friendly cottage. The secluded settlement of Goongerah is nestled between the Snowy River and Errinundra National Parks and wilderness areas, making it an ideal base for short or extended walks.

Solar power, wood stove, water wheel, forest-friendly building materials and a dry composting loo are just part of what makes Jacarri a working model of a low-impact, environmentally-sustainable living space. Clean, spacious and fully self-contained. The cottage is situated on a small organic farm on the edge of the forest next to the Brodribb River.

Sit in the rocker with your feet on the veranda rail, swim in the river or explore the ancient forests and surrounding mountains. For discovering the more immediate area, hire mountain bikes or take a horse trek, then return to the comforts of a country cottage - minus the telly and phone.



Sleeps four people. Organic farm produce is available in season. From \$60 to \$100 a night.

Bonang Rd, Goongerah  
(Private Bag 3 ORBOST Vic. 3888)  
Ph & fax (03) 5154 0145 email  
<croeg@bigpond.com>

## Riparian Adventures

By Lee Speedy

Last February, FOWSP held the canoe trip along the Yarra on a workday Thursday afternoon and I had to miss out! This year Josh, our nursery manager, coordinated the canoe hire for a mild Saturday morning and a dozen FOWSPians well appreciated this change in day. Meeting at the Warrandyte Bridge, we were then driven via Jumping Creek Reserve to our launch spot at Stane Brae. Initially, I was a little disappointed that we weren't beginning our trip further along the Yarra, nearer Mount Lofty. Some of us then decided it would be a calmer, healthier trip if we intentionally did not team up with our partners. Several rapids and minor dramas later, I knew this to be so!

The first feeling that struck me travelling along the Yarra in our plastic canoes was how rarely, in a year or even a decade, most of us appreciate Wonga Park, Kangaroo Ground and Warrandyte from the riparian perspective. We usually drive over the bridge, looking down at the Yarra, but so rarely travel along it. It's so easy to get disorientated in these hills and valleys, and we spent much of our time leisurely wondering which bend or side street we were now approaching. Not that you really see much development from the river. It's amazing how many houses we know to be hidden just a few metres away.

Not being a 'Murray marathoner', I struggled a bit with the paddling: too much on one side, not enough on the other. I expected the canoes to respond immediately when we changed paddling sides, before losing control down the wrong side of a rapid. I shall try to remember next time NOT to go down rapids backwards, get stuck on rocks, nor scrape the bottom of the canoe!

At lunchtime, we pulled over at Black Flat for barbecued sausages and very welcome cool drinks. This was cheerily delivered to us by Andy, the Ranger in Charge. We had plenty of time for food and a few laughs at any wetter paddler's expense, before moving on to finish our trip. (Did you know there's a handy pit toilet at Black Flat? Well, I didn't!)

Whilst leisurely paddling, we took the time to notice numerous birds and riverside plants. The Yarra gradually revealed paperbarks, Lomatia, tall Manna gums and the only colony of *Vallisneria spiralis* in WSP. My 'plant-head' friends tell me we saw *Gynatrix pulchella*, *Blechnum minus*, *Pomaderris racemosa*, *Lycopus* and *Phragmites australis*. Mid-afternoon in a mystery location, Wolfgang also spotted a rather relaxed pair of powerful owls.

By the time we pulled our canoes in near the bridge, we were tired yet happy. Quite content in the knowledge that we merrily completed a SHORT version of the Warrandyte canoe trip! If you haven't been on the river's bends for years, I do recommend you come along next February.



# Going Batty (Part One)

By Cath Andrew



About eight FOWSPians and rangers met at Jumping Creek Reserve on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> February at 7:30pm to go bat trapping.

After a hot day it was a balmy moonlit evening, just right for going batty and for assisting Craig Lupton from Dandenong Valley Parklands with his research. The object was to verify a ten year old study of the number of species of bats in WSP. We erected harp traps in three sites around Blue Tongue Bend. Harp traps consist of vertical filaments of fishing line with a canvas collection pouch below.

While waiting for dark, Craig set up an Anabat detector which registered the frequency of bat calls within 50 metres of the ground. The information was relayed to a laptop and speaker and Craig could tell us which type of bats were flying overhead. Meanwhile we were enlightened with the secret, somewhat intimate, life of bats from the rangers. Our collective knowledge produced some amazing facts.

## Did you know

- Bats will not get caught in your hair - they are very skilful navigators.
- There is no danger from having bats in your house. They eat moths and mosquitoes.
- Bats will not bite you in your sleep.
- Male bats have huge testicles before mating in autumn.
- Female bats store sperm, go into torpor in winter and produce one or two offspring in October or November.
- You can tell a male Little Forest bat from a Southern Forest bat only by rolling back its foreskin.
- Bats clump together (cross species) to keep warm.
- Bat poo, when rolled between the fingers, remains firm. Mouse poo (about the same size) is sticky.
- Healthy bats do not carry rabies. If you must handle them, as a precaution wear rubber gloves and ensure your rabies shots are up to date. A bite from an infected bat must break the skin to get the virus into the human system.
- Bats eat up to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of their body weight in a night.
- Bats hibernate or go into torpor for about three weeks during winter and will emerge briefly for sustenance. Daily torpor allows them to save energy by dropping their body temperature and lowering their breathing and

heart rate. Because bats need to fly, they cannot store too much fat for prolonged hibernation and, if disturbed during winter, they may not survive.

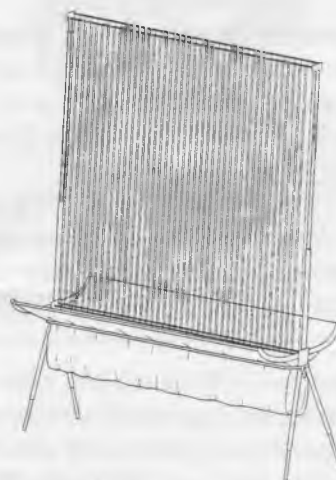
When we first checked the trap at 9.30pm, we were disappointed to find only one Lesser Long Eared Bat. However, next day at 7:30am, before it became hot, we visited the traps again and this time we became a bit more excited. This is what we found:

Type of Bat	male	female
Lesser Long Eared Bat	1	2
Gould's Wattle Bat	9	14
Little Forest Bat	3	3
Large Forest Bat	0	3
Chocolate Wattled Bat	0	2
Unidentified Forest Bat	0	2 (either Little or Southern Forest Bats)

**Total Trapped 39**

After dismantling the traps Craig, Margaret and Frankie took the bats back to the park office for identification, measuring and keeping them cool until it was time to release them back in their territory at 8pm.

We had an informative, entertaining and fascinating time in the bush. Thanks to the bats, Park staff and Craig. Now, I for one, have more understanding of the habits of the numerous bats that congregate in my garage and leave tiny firm pellets on my car and a scattering of moth wings and beetle carcasses on the floor.



## Harp Trap

*The Harp traps we used had about 3.2 sq. m of catching space and was erected along a track with branches meeting overhead. It was sufficiently warm that the bats didn't get chilled and it was not the time of year for nursing mums.*

**More Bat Facts in next month's newsletter**



## Ranger's Report

By Andrew Nixon (Ranger-in-Charge)

### Environment

- **Brush Tailed Phascogale (Tuan)** – Four confirmed sightings of this Flora & Fauna Guarantee listed mammal species have been made in the State Park over a number of weeks prior to Christmas last. An excellent result in support to the research partners project that was undertaken in the Spring 2000 period.
- **Weed management works** – Further work on removal of willows from the Yarra river has been completed in association with Melbourne Water. Warrandyte State Park is also managing a riparian weed eradication project in the park on behalf of Melbourne Water. \$15,000 funding is supplied from Melbourne Water
- **Friends Group Grant** – expenditure of a \$1500 grant for protection of *Pterostylis nana* (Dwarf Greenhood orchid) by building a predator proof fence has been completed.
- **Green Corps application successful** – WSP together with Yarra Valley Parklands has been successful in gaining a Green Corps team for the Yarra Biolink project. Site preparation and production of 25,000 seedling (at Warrandyte sites) has been undertaken and now awaits arrival of the team in April.
- **Drought Restriction levels 1 / 2** – Melbourne Water has advised that for landholders who pump from the Yarra, a drought restriction 'Level 1' has been implemented. Are now also close to Level 2.

### Visitor Services / Assets

- **Holiday Interpretations program recommences** – A five week holiday interpretations program was planned, resourced, and delivered for the summer holiday period. This is the first time in

five years that such a program has been run in the Warrandyte State Park. Staffing of the program was

- been facilitated by the basing of a PV summer ranger at the Park whose focus for the first half of the employment period was on the program. The program proved to be very popular, highlighting the importance of such activities to the community.

- **Vandalism** – A significant amount has occurred in the State Park and reserves over the last month. Many signs and locks have been damaged, apparently by the one vandal. \$2,500 + damage
- **Fire Crew** – Four NRE Project Fire fighters commenced in the December period. Operational fuel reduction requirements have now been completed for the year. This is a month ahead of the last two fire seasons when Warrandyte did not have a full complement of PFF's. Nil public complaints have been received this year.
- **Water Tank** – A new water tank and guttering is in place at Jumping Creek toilets. The new system, leaf and dirt free, will hopefully be providing more palatable drinking water.
- **Stane Brae access track** – a new all weather access track is currently being constructed at Stane Brae. This will allow access 12 months of the year across the paddock area. Sides of the track are to be vegetated as also the 3 gullies. This will provide treed corridors connecting some of the isolated coupes and stands of eucalypts.

### Other

- Two new staff - Joanne Antrobus will be the new '2 days per week' environment ranger, replacing the days that David Van Bockel now will spend with his family. Jo is natural resource trained, and is currently working at PV Woori Yallock. Elaine Bayes is the new summer ranger and is working on a variety of projects around the park including a survey of the park boundaries, and upgrade of the visitor notice boards. Elaine will be with us until the end of March.

## Blue Tongue Bend Walk

On Thursday March 15<sup>th</sup>

Meet at 10.00am at Sandy Bay car park, Jumping Creek Reserve (Melway ref. 23K9)

For a pleasant walk along the river track. Magnificent views of the Yarra River.

We will leave a couple of cars at Blue Tongue Bend to drive back to the main picnic area, checking out the site of the rare Smooth Pomaderris on the way.

BYO lunch



## Worth Repeating

### Fangs a lot! This man will catch that snake in the grass

By David Wroe

"He's got his eye on you, mate. You're a marked man," laughed John Birkett as we nervously contemplated the tiger snake's black, beady eyes.

After years of clearing Melbourne's back yards of unwanted visitors, the 47-year-old herpetologist and licensed snake-catcher is a slick hand with the slithering creatures.

"I've never really panicked," he insisted yesterday. "But your adrenal glands get a work-out at times."

Mr Birkett - who might be Harry Butler's twin - yesterday released a brown snake and two tiger snakes into the healthy snake population at Candlebark Park in Templestowe.

When he had earlier coaxed one of the tiger snakes out of a rock wall at the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency building in Yallambie, onlookers were expecting him to trap the metre-long snake with a fearsome clamp.

Instead, he snatched it by the tail and, despite its wild thrashing which prompted a colossally unheroic leap backwards by his audience - popped it into a pillow case and dropped it in a household rubbish bin.

"I had to hassle the hell out of him to come out of that hole," he said. "When he did come out, he was off like a shot."

Despite spending so much time antagonising venomous tiger snakes, brown snakes, copperheads and red-bellied black snakes - he is also keeper in charge of reptiles at the Melbourne Zoo Mr Birkett said he had never been bitten. "Yes you have, Dad," protested his 13-year-old son Rael who, with brother Liam, 15, was along for the ride. It emerged that he was nipped once by a baby tiger snake that didn't even have enough venom to make his vision blurry.

There were only a few deaths each year in Australia from snake bites, and even those were usually avoidable, he said.

"We have more people dying of bee stings in Australia than snake bites."

But because people seem to be naturally hysterical about snakes Mr Birkett is run off his feet during summer. He's been called remove snakes everywhere, from an Ansett plane to a car rental office in the city.

He's avoided advertising because he can barely cope with the business even now. "I wouldn't have a life," he said. Instead customers are referred to him by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

Source: *The Age* 25/1/01



## Slide Nights

FOWSP will be holding two BBQ Slidenights at the Folly, before winter arrives. The first slide show will display and enrich our understanding of the ancient **Goolengook forests in Far East Gippsland**. These forests are home to the long-footed potoroos, powerful owls, majestic eucalypts and Victoria's only waratah, *Telopea oreades*. Andrew Picone, a member of CROEG (Concerned Residents of East Gippsland) will speak passionately about the threats and beauties of these ancient ecosystems.

**When: Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March**

**Where: The Folly and nearby BBQ facilities are at Pound Bend, Warrandyte (near the Ranger's Office Melway 23 C10).**

The friendly and casual BBQ will commence at **6.30pm** and the inspiring Slideshow will be from **8pm**. Please bring along your favourite food supplies, a chair and your best pair of eyes!

In April or May, we will hold a similar BBQ Slide night on **"Antarctica and Macquarie Island"**. As a surprising number of FOWSPians have been down south, we would like several speakers (or braggers?) to share their polar experiences. If you have photos / slides of Antarctica or Macquarie Island, please phone Lee Speedy on 9437.0894 before Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April, so that we can coordinate these "display & boast" sessions! Final details of this night will then be advertised in FOWSP's April newsletter.

# One for the Birds

## A Book Review

By Ray Clarke

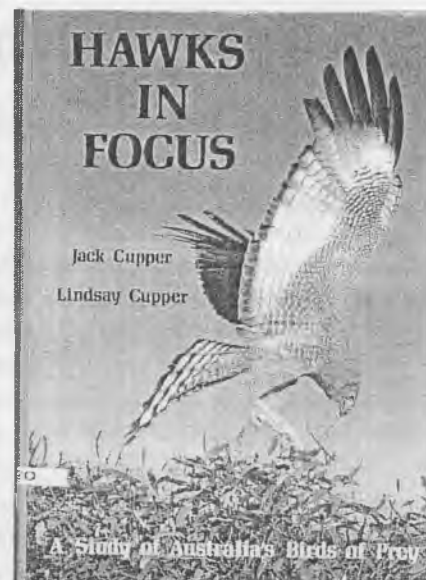
'Hawks in Focus' is a gift from Ranger David (Frankie) Farrar and is signed by the authors, Jack Cupper and his son Lindsay.

Jack lost an eye at Tobruk, and, following a mild heart attack, decided to fill a gap in Australian ornithology by studying the breeding and nesting habits of diurnal birds of prey. This book is the result and covers 26 eagles, harriers, kites, falcons and goshawks. It crystallises seven years work and 350,000 kilometres travel while they were intermittently away from their fruit growing in Mildura.

The key to the detailed notes on each species behaviour, and to the close-up photographs, is the use of five observation towers which the Cuppers designed themselves. These are in demountable aluminium sections and can be rapidly erected to reach up to 30 metres and to support a hide on top. The sections are carried on top of their vehicles. As the tower rises it is well guyed (wire now as correllas chewed through ropes!)

They say, "We've sat for countless hours in a tiny hide at heights up to 30 metres in extremes of heat or cold where one could shed a kilogram or more a day in a 'Turkish Bath' or conversely sit with feet numb from the bitter cold and wonder how those steps down to the ground are going to be negotiated on feet that have no feeling."

Woven in with the ornithology are many anecdotes of travel adventures and of out-back people who seemed to extend hospitality as a matter of course.



The book renews one's wonder at the perfection of the wing of a bird, surely one of the triumphs of nature. The book's cover, a photo of a spotted harrier with wings at full stretch, is itself riveting.

Although all chapters are of interest, their account of the pursuit of the rare grey falcon appealed to me, both the text and the photos. Having located a pair they say, "We felt certain they were breeding or about to do so, but then we started to worry about egg collectors. One of them had made it plain to us that the eggs were prized far above the \$500 we'd been offering for information of a pair nesting. We'd advertised throughout the nation to no avail." (This is not the only reference to egg stealing, which is apparently all too common.)

'Hawks in Focus' is not a cold technical book, but a warm account of a family's persistence and enthusiasm in pursuing their chosen subject. It is now in the library catalogued B220. A book to be treasured.

## Warrandyte Festival

The weekend of March 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>

FOWSP will be setting up the trailer next to the Park tent.

If you can spend an hour or two on duty at the 'stall' anytime over the weekend  
ring Marie on 9712 0498





### **Weed Walk**

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> of January was the day 19 members of the North Ringwood 'nomads' walked along a track of historical interest – 'The Goat Track' and read the 1993 notice about Melbourne Water improving the area (rehabilitation planting).

It is the most prolific weed infested area I have seen in all my walks around Warrandyte. Cotoneaster, pittosporum, masses of ivy, blackberries, agapanthus, spiky hawthorn bushes, bamboo and honeysuckle all lie in wait to spread their seed. It needs attention.

At the start of the track (north-east corner of the bridge) is a bronze plaque "Warrandyte Waterworks Trust supplied this area from 19<sup>th</sup> August 1961 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1970".

### **Rangers Roundabout**

David Nugent is going to Central Highlands district (Kinglake/Eildon/Cathedral Range/Mt Samaria). He will be replaced by Mary Lou Dixon as Chief Ranger of Yarra District.

### **Journey to Journalism**

Jeni Willis and Ali have crossed the Nullabor, returning from W.A.'s South coast. Jeni will start a B.A – Journalism at R.M.IT.

### **Plants Proliferating**

According to the Nursery Manager there are now over 40,000 plants in the Park nursery.

### **Covert Complaint**

One gentleman with the Thursday working group commented "No sugar in the potting shed, no tea or coffee, and especially no sticky bun".

### **Phefleys Pills**

Ranger Brian is trying to give up smoking again. This time he's trying Zyrban pills. He says they are actually working.

### **Rapid Response**

11.50am Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February. "We've got a fire at Yarra Bend. Need the tanker – two slip-ons". The staff moved into action, arrangements made, others summoned – and yours truly moved aside.

But what is a 'slip-on'? They are small flexible water carrying containers placed on a 4WD where they can be taken into difficult situations.

### **'Slip-on Slap'**

Slip-ons used to be made of pig skin and were called 'pig units'. But in the dim dark past the name was changed as police at the fire sites felt that 'pig units' gave the wrong impression.

### **Perton at the Park**

A visitor to our Park recently was Victor Perton, State Opposition spokesman for the Environment.

### **Ensure Insurance**

A new form is out for all nursery volunteers to register on 'Volunteer Insurance Monitoring' form (C 0004 Part A and B).

### **Fire Front**

Reasonably quiet so far for January and February.

### **David Days**

Ranger David Van Bockel is now working three days a week at the Park. A two-day a week replacement, Joanne Antrobus, starts soon

### **Accent on Elaine**

Elaine Bayes (summer Ranger) is doing various projects at the Park. You'll know her by her Glaswegian accent.

### **C.L.P.L**

Ranger Glen Jameson was guest speaker at the recent Bolin Bolin 'Cultural Landscape Precinct' launch.

### **Nixon News**

Andy Nixon's son Daniel has a pierced ear.

### **Sugarloaf Story**

Sometimes seen at WSP are Rangers Mick Smythe and John Gower who are actually based at Sugarloaf and are up there most of the time.

### **Awards Again**

In my opinion another person who should receive an award is Glen Jameson who is a Technical Specialist at the Park. Glen was a founding member and co-ordinator of FOWSP and later ensured the group continued at a time when it could have collapsed. Over and above his Ranger duties Glen has led specialist walks etc. and through his personal efforts and writings brought a deeper understanding of our total environment to the community.

### **Birthday Bash**

How did our nursery manager celebrate his birthday on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February – by working at the Park nursery with a little extra help?

### **Fast Food**

In a rapid response to the 'Covert Complaint' a roster has been organised for morning tea for the Thursday nursery activity.

### **Dragon Detected**

Eastern Water Dragons have been seen along the Yarra River adjacent to the Park.





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Friends of Warrandyte State Park Inc.  
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Warrandyte, 3113

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## The Yarra River



**The Yarra River meanders through the Warrandyte Hills from Mount Lofty to Pound Bend.**

### FOWSP Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

Tel no. ....

Family \$20

Single \$15

Concession \$10