

April 2001

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



# Newsletter

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

## Environmental Seminars Selection

By Pat Coupar

There are many benefits of being a member of FOWSP: a free plant once a month from our trailer at the Warrandyte market; advice on weeds and revegetation and the opportunity to obtain indigenous plants for a small donation from the State Park nursery.

There is a range of activities available for members such as fauna surveys, flora walks and slide shows. We have an extensive library located in the office at the Rangers depot, with a diverse selection of books for reference or for borrowing.

Most months, in the newsletter, we advertise one or two environment seminars that are upcoming. But there is never room to list them all.

For the last ten years Greening Australia Victoria (supported and sponsored by Parks Victoria) have run community training programs that include a series of one day sessions (many of which are now on a Saturday) as well as night sessions, bus tours and local forums.

Nillumbik Council also have a program of workshops and seminars on environmental matters, while Manningham Council has the Green Wedge series of environment seminars. There are also the one off seminars, and biennial conferences like the recent 'Friends Network Conference' at Wilson's Promontory. The

presenters are usually well qualified and extremely knowledgeable about their subject.

Over the years a number of Fowspians have attended a variety of training courses and reported back to the group through the newsletter on a range of subjects - much of it highly relevant to Warrandyte.

The cost of the training programs varies enormously. To encourage more members to take advantage of them, the committee has made the decision to fund either the whole amount or make a contribution to cost. In return, all we ask is for a report on the seminar or workshop. It can be a brief half page or a detailed account, such as Flora Anderson's excellent summary of the seminar she recently attended on Australian weeds, featured in this newsletter.

As we cannot advertise the whole list of environment seminars each month in the newsletter, so the programs will be pinned up on the noticeboard inside the 'Folly' building at the Rangers depot, Pound Bend.

If any member chooses to go along to one of the seminars and would like a contribution to the cost from FOWSP, just make sure you obtain a receipt for any fees paid and send it to our treasurer at PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113.



## Monday on The Murray

By Pat Coupar

It was a bit like wagging school. An illicit day off. It was Monday, not a public holiday, but an ordinary working day. We were camped on a sandy beach on a long sweeping bend of the Murray River in the Barmah State Park.

This is a popular place, at certain times – long weekends, Easter and Christmas are bedlam here, according to the locals. But at times like this there is no one, just the animals, and there are plenty of those: kangaroos, koalas, possums, emus and of course the parrots. Galahs and sulphur-crested cockatoos rule the Red Gums in squawking, raucous disharmony, while the water is the domain of ducks, herons and darters.

The Barmah Forest boasts the largest stand of River Red Gums in the world. Its wetlands are of international significance, and yet only a small proportion is reserved as State Park and even then grazing and selective harvesting is permitted in certain areas. We do not treat our natural assets well.

We left Melbourne on Friday afternoon knowing that the forecast for the weekend was for rain. Once over the Divide though, the Melbourne forecast no longer applies and although it rained that night,



Saturday and Sunday were partly cloudy, if a little windy. By Monday the clouds had gone and the wind had dropped. It was one of those made-to-order Autumn days with an immaculate sky and pure sweet air. The sun had regained some warmth enough, in fact, to enjoy a swim in the strong flowing river.

It had been very much a spur of the moment decision to steal a day from the working week. Monday on the Murray is highly recommended. The camping is free. The setting is priceless.

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## Special Thanks to Fowspians

Another year another successful Warrandyte Festival. The FOWSP display was very well attended and the offer of a free plant a great enticement for people to stop by and see what our group is all about. Four new members signed up on the spot and many more took away brochures and other information. It was also an opportunity for members to renew their subscriptions.

Many thanks to Marie Krause who did a great job organising the roster this year, such an important role that makes everything run smoothly. Thanks to all those members who volunteered their time to be on duty over the weekend at the trailer display.

This is the first year we have had the trailer for our festival display and what a fantastic difference it made. Tangled tent flaps, unruly guy ropes and collapsing poles are a thing of the past. Thank goodness.

Special thanks to FOWSP committee member Geoff Speedy for his tremendous efforts last year in organising the purchase and fitting out of the trailer which now bears our group's name in large letters on the outside.

Geoff was also the 'brains and the brawn' behind the stunning front and back colour edition of last month's newsletter – and it was not without hitches! We have had some excellent feedback on the colour cover and may repeat it again next year.

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## Attention

FOWSP membership renewals are now **Overdue** If you have not paid your subscription for the year 2001 please fill in the form on the back of this newsletter.

If you are unsure if you subscription is due or are not sure if you have paid, contact the membership secretary Lee Speedy on 9437 0894

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# Going Batty (Part two)

By Cath Andrew

## Details of species trapped on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2001 (Blue Tongue Bend – Jumping Ck Reserve)

### Lesser Long Eared Bat (*Nyctophilus geoffroyi*)

7-13g; 40-50mm. This is the most widespread species of bat in Australia and the most common species in Melbourne. It has adapted well to agricultural and urban environments and tolerates a variety of temperatures. Long fluffy light grey fur, lighter belly; long ribbed ears, may be furled; very large eyes; often alone but maybe in colonies up to 200 usually give birth to twins during the day after a labour of 1-2.5 hours; short broad wings make them slow fliers, close to the ground.

They use their eyes and ears rather than relying on echolocation to catch moths, ants and spiders. Consequently, they can prey on many sonar sensitive insects. But feeding near the ground and slow flying also makes them prone to cat attack.

### Gould's Wattled Bat (*Chalinolobus gouldi*)

9-13g; 65-75mm. These are very docile and easy to handle. Soft, dense brown-black fur and lighter belly; large lobe of skin at the corner of the mouth and another partly covering the ear opening; roost in colonies up to 100; rapid, direct flight on long narrow wings; forage 5-10kms from their roost, make audible, high pitched sound in flight.

### Chocolate Wattled Bat (*Chalinolobus morio*)

7-14g; 50-60mm. These are the first of the bats to emerge after sunset when there is less competition for food. This makes them more vulnerable to predation from Pied Butcher birds, owls and cats. Soft chocolate coloured fur; black head and shoulders; short muzzle, high furred forehead, short, broad ears with a large lobe of skin at the corner of its mouth; long narrow wings; fast flier with sudden vertical drops to catch aerial prey; often in colonies of several hundred with other species; hibernates in the cooler months for a shorter time; prefers roosts in old large trees, especially River Red Gums; eat moths, crickets and water bugs.

### Large Forest Bat (*Vespadelus darlingtoni*)

5-8g 38-49mm. These bats occur widely across Eastern and Southern Victoria, but around greater Melbourne, they only occur where there is substantial cover of indigenous eucalypts. Short rusty brown fur, older bats are black round ears; fast, direct fliers; moths are their favourite food; in colonies up to 80 and often with other species of bats.

### Little Forest Bat (*Vespadelos vulturinus*)

3-6g 35-45mm. grey fur; light coloured belly; foreshortened head and short muzzle, small rounded ears; fast, fluttering fliers feed exclusively on aerial insects; small colonies (5-18) and separated by gender; favours S or SW entrances to roost home range is 100-500 meters.

### **Other species which may occur in WSP.**

Eastern Broad Nose Bat, Gould's Long Eared Bat, Large-footed Myotis, Common Bent Wing Bat, Southern Freetail and White Striped Freetail Bat.

### **All the bats we trapped in WSP:**

- are common throughout Victoria
- are all insect eaters (flying and terrestrial insects).
- may roost in tree hollows, under loose bark, in buildings, in exhaust pipes, under roller blinds, in washing, under eaves or bridges, in mine shafts, culverts or in bird nests.
- may roost alone or in colonies.
- have females larger than the males.
- form nursery colonies in spring and disperse in autumn
- usually produce 1 offspring, which suckles from a teat in the mother's armpit.
- give birth to young weighing about 20% of the mother's body weight, equivalent to a human giving birth to a 15kg. baby.
- are weaned at 6-8 weeks of age. They lose their milk teeth by day 22 and are carried by mum until well formed (about 6 weeks).



**Lesser long eared bat (Cath Andrew)**

"One of a colony of Lesser Long Eared Bats that frequent our garage. Sometimes they clump in groups of 10 or more."

## Foxes and the pressure they place on Powerful Owls

By David Farrar (Frankie)

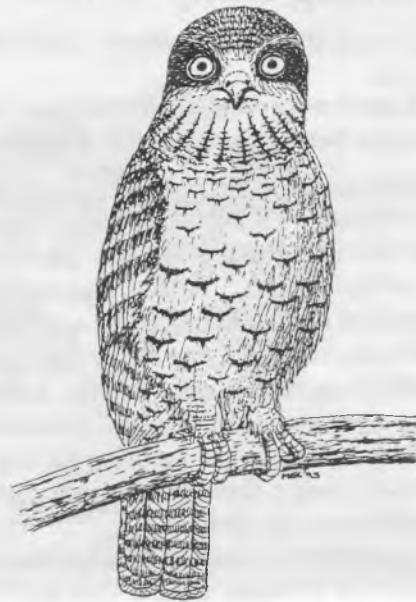
Rangers at Warrandyte State Park are implementing another year of integrated rabbit control works in the Park. Other reserves to obtain rabbit control works this year are One Tree Hill Nature Conservation Reserve east of St Andrews and Sugarloaf Reservoir Park.

Rangers are also concerned about local fox numbers and the effect on native fauna, especially Powerful Owl (*Ninox strenua*). This is the largest Australian owl growing to approximately 55cm (Just under 2ft); it is also, unfortunately, one of our threatened species. The Powerful Owl is listed under the provisions of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 as a Threatened species in Victoria. Many residents of Warrandyte will recognise the call of the Powerful Owl, which can be heard at dusk. The deep "Whoo hoo" has a ringing, musical quality, which carries, along the Yarra River.

The Powerful Owl will silently fly through the eucalypt forest seeking out prey and then swiftly swoop in for the kill. It feeds mainly on arboreal mammals (those living in trees) such as Brush-tailed Possums and Common Ringtail Possums, or birds like parrots, magpies and kookaburras.

During the last three years, Rangers have become aware of three pairs of Powerful Owl nesting in various areas of the park. The owls are rare in terms of abundance and distribution in Victoria and all owls in the park have had two young last season. Department of Natural Resources & Environment research officers as part of an ongoing monitoring program banded the fledglings over the last three years.

At one site fledgling young were lost to predation by fox. At another site one fledgling



was found dead, cause of death unknown, however foxes have been the cause of death of fledgling young near by this area and a fledgling young owl with attached research radio tracking device was observed dead in a fox den four years ago.

Foxes appear to be the main cause of decline of fledgling Powerful Owls, however roaming dogs and cats could also be a cause of decline. Where to from here?

A Fox control for will planned and implement for Warrandyte State Park over the next twelve months. A new safe way of trapping foxes is with the means of a soft jawed trap, which has been approved for use in Victoria. An integrated Fox control program will be devised to protect fledgling Powerful Owls and also protect high conservation zones in the State Park where foxes can be reduced to low numbers.

Any information on this call David Farrar (Frankie) on 9844 2659

## WELSH CAKES

8oz self-raising flour  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon mixed spice  
4 oz butter  
2oz caster sugar  
4oz currants  
1 egg  
2 tablespoons milk

Sift flour and spice. Rub in butter till mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs.

Stir in sugar and currants. Mix to a stiff paste with beaten egg and milk.

Turn onto a floured board, knead lightly, then roll out to  $\frac{1}{4}$  thickness. Cut into approximately 18-20 rounds with 2-2" plain biscuit cutter.

Cook on a well greased heated griddle, thick frying pan or fry pan. Allow  $1\frac{1}{2}$  - 2 minutes per side. Dust with caster sugar.

# Can Australian Plants Be Weeds? (Part One)

A Seminar presented by the Weed Science Society of Victoria on February 22nd 2001

Report by Flora Anderson

Don't hold your breath, the answer is in the affirmative. But, the question used as the title was not the purpose of the seminar. Rather, it was to ask how big is the problem, and to find out what problems can be encountered with our native Australian plant gardens now and in the future.

The selection of speakers was well qualified to tackle the task, but I thought it was a tactical error to place Tim Low as the final speaker. Tim Low's ability to throw the cat among the pigeons and shock an audience into a bit of lateral thinking would have been a good opener. Instead, we went home with this gem ringing in our ears. "You may be better to stick to hydrangeas and roses than to experiment with wattles." It would have been useful to have that little bomb discussed by the learned company.

The first speaker was Richard Groves, principal research scientist, plant pathology/weed invasions at CSIRO Canberra (CRC for Weed Management Systems). His subject, "**Can some Australian native plants go feral?**" The examples he gave of behaviour ex-Australia were *Acacia* and *Hakea* in South Africa, deliberately planted to stabilize sandy flats; *Pittosporum undulatum* in Jamaica, India, Europe and South America and *Melaleuca quinquenervia* in Florida. In Australia examples of feral behaviour were: *Acacia sophorae* in SW Victorian coastal areas, *Sollya heterophylla* and *Acacia baileyana* in SE Australia and *Pittosporum undulatum* west of its range in Victoria. *Eremophila* and *Dodonea* in inland grazing areas of NSW have spread within their indigenous range possibly due to overgrazing, floods or climate fluctuation; *Hakea sericea* in Nadgee Flora Reserve and *Leptospermum laevigatum* and *Kunzea ambigua* at Wilson's Promontory NP possibly for similar reasons. It was thought that many populations fluctuate with extremes in climate and other disturbance.

The question of *Kunzea ericoides* was raised with the result that Dr Trudi Mullett promised to send me a copy of a paper published in Australian Journal of Ecology (1999). The authors are Ruth Singer and Mark Burgman of the School of Botany University of Melbourne. A copy will be lodged in the FOWSP library.

Richard Groves final remarks concerned management of feral Australian plants.

- Study their ecology. *Sollya* needs research.
- Biological control.
- Avoid planting trees and shrubs whose seeds are dispersed by birds
- Limit nursery sales.
- Consider doing nothing. Allow time for natural succession.

Trudi Mullett, also from CRC Weed Management Systems, CSIRO Canberra was next with "**Pittosporum undulatum. Its effect on plant biodiversity**". In Trudi's opinion this plant is the most serious threat to indigenous species mainly because it is pre-adapted to exploit changes in environmental conditions and needs ongoing control for years and years and years..... Seed is dispersed by blackbirds and currawongs. *P. undulatum* has actually invaded, in weedy proportions, its own natural range in coastal NSW and East Gippsland. Invasions in Portland show a 75% decline in species diversity. In dry sclerophyllous communities its invasion results in a loss of grasses and twiners and thus an altered community composition. Even the composition of litter changes and there's a loss of terrestrial orchids. At Morwell it has moved up out of gullies with altered fire regimes, giving opportunities to invade disturbed areas..

Message! "Spread the word - not the weed."

The subject of "**Western Australian native species as weeds**" was treated by Patrick Pigott KTRI. Most of the known WA weedy species are tolerant to a hostile environment and were therefore planted in Victorian coastal areas because of this 'hardiness'. What a lineup of 'garden thugs'! *Sollya heterophylla*, *Hakea laurina*, *H. drupacea* (*H. suaveolens*) *Paraserianthes lophantha* (*Albizzia lophantha*), *Acacia saligna* and *Agonis flexuosa*. *Chamelaucium uncinatum* is weedy in its own home range. 'Purple Pride' in fact has invaded bush near Perth.

Patrick warned that new introductions to horticulture could be major threats especially those from families which are already known to be weedy.

Suggested action:-

- Quarantine
- Work with Nursery Industry.
- Breed infertile varieties of weedy species.

Actually, considering that one quarter of Australian vascular plants come from the South-west WA Botanical Province, we are lucky there are so few of feral, the main reason being the poor climate and soil match with eastern states.

**Part two next month**



## Fauna Surveys for Friends of Warrandyte State Park

Friends group members are invited to help in fauna surveys during May through to September 2001. The objective is to survey using a number of trapping techniques over the survey period and see what fauna species can be observed and to see if we can find any new species if possible in the Warrandyte State Park and Reserves.

Techniques will include Elliott & small cage trapping, Harp trapping for bats, nest box

survey and maybe some spotlighting for small mammals. Birds will also be surveyed in different habitats throughout the Warrandyte State Park and Reserves.

I will produce a roster of activities soon so you can pick and chose which survey activity you would like to attend. So stay tuned!

Any comments see Frankie or phone 9844 2659.



## New Northern Neighbours

By Geoff Speedy

**F**OWSP will be pleased to hear of conservation changes just to the north of Warrandyte. Two large areas of land, the **Panton Hill Bushland Reserves** (140 ha) and the **Willis Nature Park** (about 85 ha) are now under management as permanent bushland reserves.

The **Panton Hill Bushland Reserves** consists of land to the east of Panton Hill, down to the Long Gully Creek. The land was forcibly acquired by Melbourne Water for the construction of a water supply dam, the proposal for which now only exists in a much scaled-down form. Land ownership was transferred to Nillumbik Shire in 1999 after a "sweetener" rezoning deal (arranged by the interim commissioners) was ratified by the new councillors.

The area now has an active "Friends" group, "**FOPHRS**". You can contact local botanist Lynlee Smith at P.O. Box 23, Smiths Gully 3760.

The 140 ha contains some intact areas of exceptionally high quality native vegetation, including VROT\* terrestrial orchids, but also areas with the usual nasties such as blackberries, pittosporum, spanish heath, and broom. There are six vegetation communities on display, comprising Riparian Forest, Swampy Forest, Valley Grassy Forest, Foothills Forest, Grassy Dry Forest and Heathy Dry Forest.

Access is via numerous dirt roads in the area, including Long Gully Road, Alma Road, Clinton's and Rodger Rd. Warrandytians will appreciate the Ironbark trees, considered a normal component of a

box forest, but noticeably absent from the Warrandyte area.

**Willis Nature Park** is a private conservation area donated by Lyle Willis for conservation in 1987. It consists of eight blocks of bushland between Smiths Gully Creek and Black Cameron Road, and adjoins the Peter Franke Reserve in Smith's Gully.

The Will & Indentures calls for the Trust for Nature to "*conserve, keep and maintain all of 'the Park' together with it's grasses, trees, plants, bushes, and other vegetation, and animals, birds, reptiles and other wildlife forever, hereafter as an example of the original Australian bush and countryside.*" It also provides for the Bird Observer's Club of Australia to have two representatives on the Committee.

Since Lyle's death in 1999, the Trust for Nature has taken over management of the Park, and has formed a Committee of Management, and a separate Supporter's Program. A management plan will be completed during 2001, and on-ground activity will include fencing, signage, weed control and species identification. Due to a number of restrictions in Lyle's wishes for the land - including No car parking, No picnics, games or sports, No bicycles, horses or public discussions of matters of controversy - an access policy for the park is still under development.

To be listed on the Supporter's Program, please write to : "Willis Nature Park", Trust for Nature, 2/385 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne 3000. You will then be kept informed as to on ground activities, and any opportunities to visit the Willis Nature Park.

\*VROT = Victorian Rare Or Threatened



### ***Elliot Experience***

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2001. As the smog and roar of the Grand Prix engulfed the City of Melbourne a large group of 'Friends' and Park staff savoured the fresh air and quiet of the Yarra bank at Pound Bend. They were checking out the forty-one Elliot traps at various sites, indicated by yellow ribbons on adjacent shrubs. A marsupial survey was being conducted with traps baited with lumps of oats, peanut butter and honey.

Several traps had been sprung, probably by foxes or other creatures, but unlike other times no animals were caught. (One 'lost' trap was found by Dick Thomson).

### ***People Present***

Involved in the above activity – as the mist still lay on the Yarra, were: Justin, Max, Chris and Ross led by Ranger David 'Frankie' Farrar. 'Friends' present were: Dick, Marion, Alastair, Sue, Alwyn, Margaret, Ben, Irene, Luke, Cath, Peter and two visitors from Bristol UK.

In May Frankie will follow up with more trapping with the assistance of Green Corps.

### ***Dozens of Drinks***

Later that morning the 'Friends assembled and put 1,900 plants into tubes (40 boxes worth). Other helpers had arrived, one of who was Josie Lee who has just finished Year 12 at Eltham High. Josie is intending to do a course in Ecology for Conservation next year at Deakin, Burwood.

And the drinks? Jeni Willis did the morning tea roster that day for the helpers. And the Welsh cakes were produced by Flora Anderson (see recipe this newsletter).

### ***New Neve***

Olive and Andy Walters have a new grand daughter called Neve.

### ***Marie on the Market***

Marie, our market stall/trailer roster organiser said that the activity on 3<sup>rd</sup> of March was very successful.

### ***"Summer Staff"***

The summer fire crew are with us until the end of March and even longer. They have assisted in work at Altona assembling 'slip ons' (fire fighting units).

### ***March Mayhem***

Three possums created mayhem in the Folly. They got into the tall storage cupboard (one was even in a glass jar). JR our NM and Cathy Willis spent sometime doing a rough sort out, Margaret Gotlib completed the clean up meticulously. Don Cameron put up a 'proper' nesting box in the Folly for the possums to live and play in.

### ***Green Corps Gardener***

Mark Gardener (at the Park here some years ago) was team supervisor for 10 Green Corps participants who worked on the 'Walk into History - Stage 2', preserving some of Warburton's natural resources.

### ***Brooklyn Botanic***

The 'Friends of Cranbourne and Melbourne Botanic Gardens' are hosting a talk by the CEO of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens Involvement in Community Horticulture and Education Programs, 10.00am for 10.30m, Mueller Hall, Botanic Gardens Melbourne. Bookings: Max Officer 9569 5542 or Virginia Henderson 9650 6398. Charges apply.

### ***Walmsley Waffle***

Dr Walmsley will be speaking at a dinner on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> May at the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens. \$37. Bookings 5990 2200. Dedicated? Controversial? He is managing director of Earth Sanctuaries Ltd.

### ***Cromack Clue***

Anyway, what is a cromack? (February newsletter).

## **Would you like to go to Antarctica?**

Well you can and it will cost you nothing

Come along and be transported to Antarctica and Macquarie Island via a slide night extravaganza with our courier Cath Andrew

Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

**Date & Time:** Friday May 11<sup>th</sup> from 6.30pm onwards (Slide show approx. 7.30pm)

**Place:** The 'Folly' at the Rangers depot/nursery, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10)

BBQ prior to the trip to Antarctica. BYO meat & drink and a plate to share.



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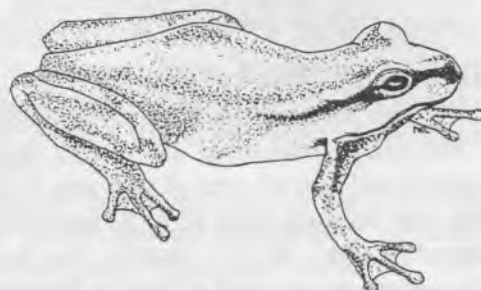
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**Ewing's Tree Frog**  
(*Litoria ewingi*)

Now that we've has some rain, one of the first species of frog to begin calling is Ewing's Tree Frog also known as the Southern Brown Tree Frog. This common species occurs in gardens and often calls some distance away from water. It feeds on insects and is capable of catching a fly in mid-flight.



## FOWSP Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

Family \$20

Single \$15

Concession \$10