

November 2001

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



## Newsletter

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

### Burgan Trials Continue

By Pat Coupar

**B**urgan trials continued last month with another visit to Black Flat Reserve. Around 16 Fowspians attended the activity. Since the trials began in April 1999 much progress has been made in clearing tons and tons of Burgan.

Originally we worked in the area where the eucalypt dieback was at its worst and the Burgan most dominant. This time, though, we took a slightly different approach by concentrating on removing Burgan from around living – albeit struggling – eucalypts and wattles with the intention of eventually meeting up with intact Burgan-free bush. Hopefully this will open up a corridor of diversity through the dense Burgan.

There are several methods of getting rid of Burgan: hand pulling young plants (although this causes a considerable amount of soil disturbance), cut and paint, frilling, and drill and fill. By far the easiest is chain sawing the tree off near its base and dabbing the cut stump with undiluted RoundUp (glyphosate). And that is what we did. Ranger-in-Charge Andy Nixon and Field Services Officer Colin Bromley took turns with the chain saw, while there were plenty of willing hands to drag and pile the branches.

The result of previous control works are looking promising, with little regrowth of the Burgan and only a small germination of its seedlings. Young wattles, eucalypts and peas that had been uncovered during the process and guarded – as rabbits are present at the site – had grown well. Meanwhile others had germinated, particularly on the site of the first burn pile. One of the reasons this area was chosen for the trial is the lack of weeds at the site. This was an

important consideration as opening up the canopy and allowing more light in could encourage the growth of weeds. We were delighted to find that no major weeds had moved into the areas where the Burgan had been removed.

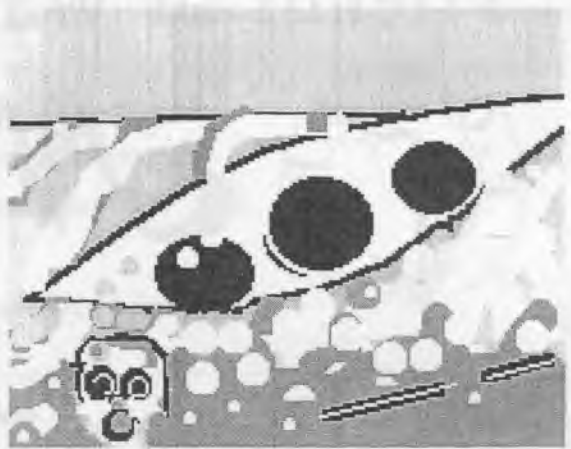
Some of our newer Fowspians may be wondering why we are putting so much time and effort into removing a plant that is indigenous to Warrandyte. The fact is that although Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*), a relative of Tea-trees, is indigenous it is totally out of balance in the environment. One only has to look at the Black Flat site and others in the Park – notably some of Yarra Brae's hillslopes and parts of Jumping Creek Reserve – to see that something is wrong.

Take factors like Bellbirds (*exhibit aggressive behaviour chasing away birds that eat psyllids*), psyllids (*insects that suck sap from eucalypt leaves*), lerps (*the sugary shelters made by psyllids and eaten by Bellbirds*), lack of grazing (*rabbits don't eat Burgan*) and Allelopathy (*the ability, attributed to Burgan, of releasing compounds which inhibit the growth of other plants*). Then throw in disturbance, fire and drought and you have a pot pourri of problems, the combination of which has probably led to the out-of-control Burgan bonanza.

Some say Burgan is just going through a natural cycle. We don't know. We may never know. But in the short-term, by releasing struggling eucalypts and wattles from Burgan's stranglehold, by freeing weak-stemmed peas and by letting in the light for patches of native grass and lilies to expand, we are at least giving a little piece of Black Flat a helping hand to recover its natural balance. The Burgan trials will continue.

# FOWSP Canoes Sink Again

By Mike Coupar



The Federal Government has been very generous in this International Year of the Volunteer (or National Year of the Election?). Up to \$5,000 was on offer to groups needing equipment to “make their work safer, easier and more enjoyable”. You would think two canoes, safety equipment and a GPS would have been just the thing to help our volunteers look after the Warrandyte State Park section of the Yarra River.

We are always involved in the ‘Clean up Australia Day’ and want to become more involved in identifying and mapping the locations of emerging environmental weeds along the banks.

Unfortunately, despite our application seeming to fit all criteria perfectly, we have missed out yet again.

Our first unsuccessful grant application for a canoe was to Melbourne Water in 2000, the second was to the Parks Victoria Community Grants Scheme in 2001 and this our third and most recent try was to the Federal Government’s International Year of Volunteers 2001 Small Equipment Grants.

Anyway we will keep trying – perhaps it will be a case of fourth time lucky.

## Tuan Fro 3

By Geoff Speedy

Choosing the best sites for the 50 Tuan nest boxes would at first appear to be very difficult. For starters, each female has a home range of up to 40 Ha, with up to 30 nest sites in that range. The best sites should have a good understorey coverage (to protect from owls and goshawks), with a good number of fallen logs for foraging. (Tuans eat large insects, spiders and centipedes). Additionally, they should have good access for FOWSP members to check the boxes, and large, rough-barked trees to hang the boxes 4-8m above the ground.

Luckily, most of the decisions have been made in a comprehensive report by E.G. McNabb of the



Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research. This report shows maps of primary and secondary importance locations in Warrandyte where additional nest boxes would be most successful. We’ve chosen Pound Bend Ridge and Black Flat as the easiest access and highest priority for the 50 FOWSP nest boxes. Installation will begin in October,

allowing several months for the animals to become accustomed to the boxes, before the breeding season in April-June.

The boxes will need checking in April-June and February-March. Between August and November, the young are left in the nest whilst the female forages, so they should not be disturbed.

Next Month ~ Competition for nest hollows between Tuans (Brush-tailed Phascogales) and Sugar Gliders.

## Book Launch

### 'Green over Gold'

*A Selection of Stories from the Bush*

**Date & Time:** Tuesday December 11<sup>th</sup> at 7.00pm

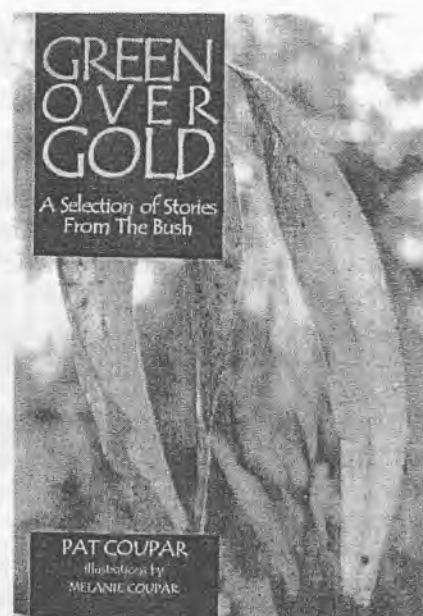
**Place:** Sandy Bay picnic area, Jumping Creek Reserve,  
Jumping Creek Rd, Warrandyte (Melways ref. 23K9)

Pat Coupar has finally gathered together a collection of some of her articles published in the Warrandyte Diary over the last eleven years. She has selected forty-eight pieces for the book entitled 'Green over Gold', each one is illustrated by her daughter Melanie.

The book has been beautifully designed by FOWSP member Zoe Murphy who has won awards for her book designs and is known among Fowspians for her work on 'Discover Warrandyte' and 'The last Cry'.

All Fowspian's are invited to the launch of this locally produced book. Signed copies of the book will be available. It would make a good present for the environmentally interested person.

If you would like to attend the launch, please ring either Pat (9844 1650) or Cathy (0418142297) so that we can get an idea of numbers.



## GO WILD For the day with FOWSP

.....And it's free!

As mentioned in the front cover article of the September issue, International Year of the Volunteer is being celebrated around the globe. How nice it is that the park staff would like to thank us for the work we have done over the years by shouting us to a day out and up the Yarra Valley. A visit to Yarra Ranges National Park, with a chance to see some 'hidden corners' is the plan. There could also be a mystery stop / venue along the way. Sumptuous smoko and lunch is all included. But seats on the bus are limited so it's ..... 'first in best seated'. Details are:

**When:** Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November

**Time:** 9.30 am – 4.00 pm, departing from the WSP office

**BYO:** Hat, backpack, waterbottle, rainjacket (surely not)  
(Transport, lunch, smoko and some laughs provided)

**Bookings:** Phone or see Kay Williams at the park office - 98442659.

## FOWSP Annual General Meeting

**Date & Time:** Sunday December 2<sup>nd</sup> at 4.30pm

**Place:** The Friends 'Folly' at the WSP Rangers depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10)

All members are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting. New nominations for committee members welcome. This is your chance to have a say, to make suggestions for any changes or new directions you would like to see for the group.

The AGM will be followed by a BBQ and an evening of music featuring African drums.



# A South African Safari

By Pat Coupar

What is it about African wildlife that is so fascinating? I never get tired of watching wildlife documentaries on television, especially if they feature those unique, majestic African species. Nowhere else are there so many animals so big, so unique and so dangerous.

On a Friday evening in October we were fortunate to have Andy Nixon, Warrandyte's Ranger-in-Charge, tell us first hand about his trip to South Africa and, through his excellent slides, take us on a journey to this remarkable country.

Andy was in South Africa attending an International Rangers Conference, the main focus of which was the African countries and conservation issues. Australia was one of 57 countries represented and among the Australian contingency was former Warrandyte State Park Ranger-in-Charge Matt Le Duc who is now based at Uluru,.

Andy began his trip in the far South of South Africa. Cape Town's Table Mountain looking exactly like you would expect – high and as flat as its name.

While South Africa is known primarily for its fauna, there lies a small area around Cape Province which is so rich in plant species that the site has been recognised as a separate botanical kingdom. The place is called Finboss, and in an area approximately the size of East Gippsland it has a mind-blowing 8,500 species of plants.

The Rangers conference was held in the Kruger National Park where most of Andy's slides were taken. The Park, which shares its eastern border with Mozambique, is absolutely huge. In common with Australia there is, it seems, an abundance of signage around the place telling you what you can and can't do. One obscure sign that Andy couldn't resist photographing showed a stylised, out of control wheel chair, complete with person, heading down a steep incline towards the mouth of a crocodile!

In fact if you want to go walking in the Park you must be accompanied by an armed guard. The animals are wild and dangerous. The most

dangerous, somewhat surprisingly, is the herbivorous, but extremely territorial hippopotamus – although I'm sure some of the others are ranked not far behind.

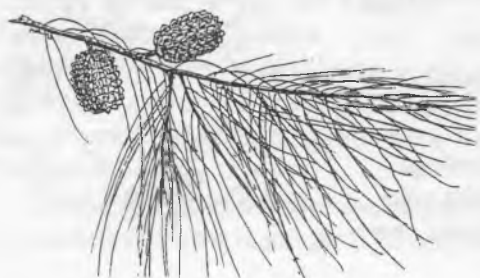
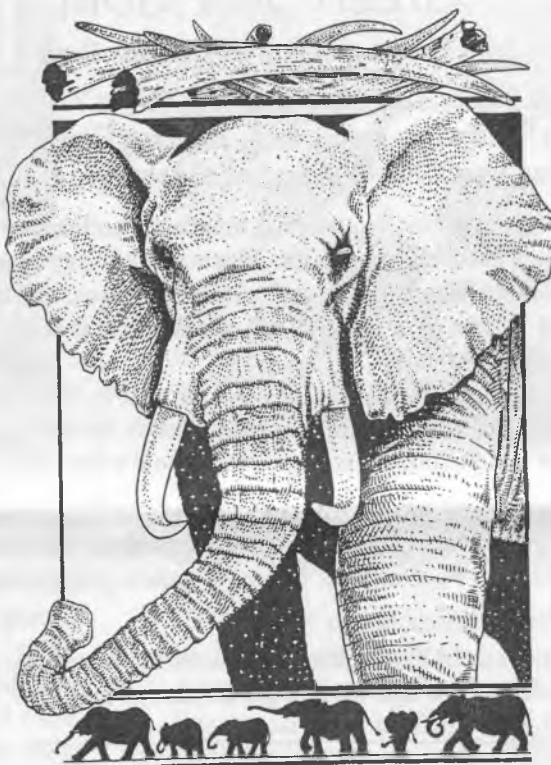
Andy explained about the differences between the White and Black Rhinos – and how to tell them apart which is not, as you might expect by

their colour. Apparently it's all in the lips. The White Rhino – the most common – has an oblong shaped mouth for grazing ground level vegetation, while the much rarer Black Rhino has a triangular shaped upper lip for browsing bushes and small trees.

There are just so many animals. There were pictures of various, elegant Antelopes, Cape Hunting Dogs, Rhinos, Elephants, Lions, Leopards, Wildebeast, Warthogs, Giraffe, Baboons and one cute-faced Mongoose.

As usual the Friends Folly was the setting for our photographic excursion to South Africa. Despite a cool, showery evening we enjoyed a bbq, before the show and a warm fire afterwards.

Many thanks to Andy for bringing along his slides and sharing his experiences with us and for giving us a greater insight into this zoologically and botanically rich, but socially poor, country.



## Botanical Meanings

Black She-oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*)

*Allo* (Gr.) *allos* – other, *casuarina* (L.) *casuarius* - the Cassowary. The branches resemble the bird's feathers.

*Littoralis* (L.) *litoria* – shore. 'Of the sea-shore'.



# To Do the Right Thing

**M**ost people who chose to live in Warrandyte do so because they enjoy the natural environment, the native animals, birds, wildflowers, the river, the views and a sense of space and freedom. Most bush blocks, though, come encumbered with varying degrees of weed invasion.

A weed is defined as a plant growing in an environment in which it does not naturally occur or put more simply – a plant growing where it is not wanted.

It is important to know the difference between Noxious and Environmental Weeds. Noxious Weeds are those that have been declared in Victoria under the Catchment and Land Protection (CALP) Act of 1994. Landowners are required to control these species not only on their land, but the adjoining half width of roadside.

Environmental weeds, which may or may not also be noxious weeds, are those that invade and threatened natural vegetation, reducing habitat for native wildlife.

The major noxious weeds in Warrandyte are:

## Trees

Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*)

Sallow Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*)

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

## Shrubs

Cape Broom (*Genista monspessulana*)

Briar Rose (*Rosa rubiginosa*)

Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)

Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*)

## Creepers and Climbers

Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*)

## Grasses, lilies and herbs

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)

Angled Onion (*Allium triquetrum*)

Patterson's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*)

St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

Soursob (*Oxalis pes-caprae*)

Bulbil Watsonia (*Watsonia meriana*)

Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*)

Serrated Tussock Grass (*Nassella trichomata*)

The major environmental weeds in Warrandyte are:

## Trees

Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.)

Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*)

Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*)

Cootamundra Wattle (*Acacia baileyana*)

## Shrubs

Spanish Heath (*Erica lusitanica*)

## Creepers and Climbers

Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonicum*)

Bluebell Creeper (*Sollya heterophylla*)

Blue Periwinkle (*Vinca major*)

Bridal Creeper (*Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*)

English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

Wandering Jew (*Tradescantia fluminensis*)

## Grasses

Chilean Needle Grass (*Nassella neesiana*)

Most landowners want to do the right thing, but don't always know where to start - which weed to tackle first.

It is a good idea to make a general assessment of your block, identifying problem areas. Try to track down the source or cause of the invasion. Select priorities.

The decision about which weeds to control and when depends on the amount of infestation, how the weed is dispersed, the type of seed produced and the ease of control.

Weeds that produce berries are spread by birds, foxes and sometimes possums. Trees and shrubs like Sweet Pittosporum, Cotoneaster, Hawthorn and Boneseed are relatively easy to control, only requiring a small amount of follow up to remove seedlings. However, plants with hard seeds that are spread by ants as well as birds, such as introduced wattles and brooms, often have a mass germination of seedlings following disturbance.

Those weeds spread by wind like grasses, thistles and some daisies generally require a greater commitment to follow up with spraying or hand weeding.

It is always better to target small infestations first, rather than biting off more than you can chew. If possible time your weed control before seed drop.

Details of how and when to treat the weeds can be found in some of the books listed below. Information can also be obtained by ringing the Warrandyte State Park on 9844 1650.

## Recommended Reading

Weed Identification (booklet) City of Manningham (2001)

Environmental Weeds in Nillumbik Shire (pamphlet) Nillumbik Shire Council (2000)

Bringing Back the Bush, Joan Bradley, Lansdowne Press (1988)

Environmental Weed Invasions in Victoria, Carr G.W, Yugovic J.V, Robinson K.E, DCNR (1992)

Noxious Weeds of Australia,

Parsons W.T, Cuthbertson

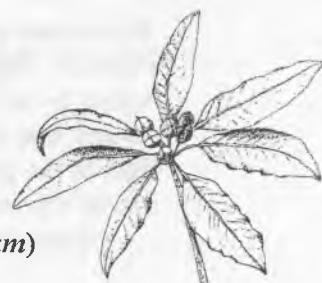
E.G, Inkata Press (1992)

Bush Invaders of SE

Australia, Muyt A, RG & FJ

Richardson (2001)

**Sweet Pittosporum**  
(*Pittosporum undulatum*)



## Worth Repeating

### Taking a Dive

**W**hat is the best time of year to undertake visual surveys for platypus?

Research conducted at \*Toorourrong Reservoir (a relatively shallow impoundment, 1-2 metres deep, located north of Melbourne near the APC's research base in Kinglake National Park) suggests that the answer is at least partly related to the timing of the platypus breeding season.

Based on surveys undertaken in early morning, more than twice as many platypus were observed from June through September (when an average of 3.4 platypus were seen per survey session) as compared to October (when an average of only 1.6 animals were seen). Over the rest of the study, from November to January, an average of 2.8 platypus were spotted per survey session.

Platypus breed in the spring, with eggs typically recorded in October from Victoria. Given that about a month is believed to elapse between the time that platypus eggs are fertilised and the time they are laid in the nest, activity in this species appears to reach a peak in the period before and during the breeding season.

In the case of females, this is likely to reflect the fact that they are working hard to store fat which will be needed while raising young. In the case of males, breeding success presumably depends on moving around to monitor the reproductive status of prospective mates while also doing their best to discourage other adult males from spending too much time in the vicinity.

By the same token, the relatively low number of platypus seen in October makes sense if a large proportion of females are involved at that time in incubating eggs and then caring for newly hatched juveniles in underground burrows.

Interestingly, platypus also spent more time on the water surface between consecutive feeding dives in the period from June through August (32% of activity time) than from September to January (25% of activity time). In terms of the animals' basic biology, this may again be related to the timing of breeding: increasing levels of male aggressiveness in late winter and early spring could well result in the population as a whole becoming more vigilant-devoting more time to watching other platypus and scanning their surroundings.

Along with the time of year, weather conditions have been found to affect the number of platypus observed at Toorourrong.

For example, the number of platypus recorded in a given survey session showed a significant positive correlation with the amount of cloud cover: the more overcast the sky, the more platypus were active during daylight hours.

As well, previous radio-tracking research has demonstrated that it is extremely difficult to see platypus feeding on windy days when the water surface is ruffled or choppy. (In consequence, visual surveys undertaken at Toorourrong are only carried out on calm, wind-free occasions.)

Based on the results summarised above, it clearly is important to take both season and weather into consideration when designing or interpreting observational surveys for platypus particularly if there is any intention of comparing the results across waterways or through time.

To help community groups deal more effectively with these issues when endeavouring to set up a visual monitoring program for platypus, an article summarising the full findings of the APC study is currently being prepared for publication.

\* Toorourrong Reservoir is the location for FOWSP Kinglake excursion on November 15<sup>th</sup>

Source: 'Ripples', Newsletter of the Australian Platypus Conservancy, Issue 20, Spring 2001

## Tube Reminder

A reminder to those FOWSP plant purchasers to return forestry tubes to the FOWSP. This can be done by depositing the tubes at the nursery (Pound Bend depot) or at the monthly FOWSP Saturday market stall. If returning to the nursery they can be placed in the large wire rack of tubes. It is located to the right of the propagating houses and has a 'Return Forestry Tubes Here' sign. A special trip isn't necessary, just remember them the next time you call in.



## Blasting Briza

By Ray Clarke

On Sunday 21 October, at Hohnes Hill Reserve, Eltham, John Miller of Nillumbik Council demonstrated the control of briza by burning.

Hohnes Hill is infested with briza, but after a walk round the Reserve, the demonstration was necessarily a small area only.

The method is to burn the seed heads when they have developed, but before they drop the seed.

John used a long handled burner connected by hose to a cylinder of compressed propane gas. To avoid the risk of fire getting away, we had on hand a knapsack spray, a beater and a supply of water.

The burner is swept horizontally just above ground level, and the seed heads drop off as soon as touched by the heat.

John said that the method had been successfully used at the St. Helena Reserve, but that it is necessary to go back the following year to deal with new growth.



Everyone is urged to come to a

# PUBLIC MEETING

to launch the Warrandyte Community Association



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21 at 8pm • Warrandyte Mechanics Institute Hall

FOR THE COMMUNITY : BY THE COMMUNITY



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**Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)**

In flower, this is the most distinctive native grass in Warrandyte and cannot be confused with any other species.

It is particularly common along remnant roadsides and responds well to slashing. In Warrandyte swathes of Kangaroo Grass can be seen along the firebreak beside Pound Bend Road.

## FOWSP Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

Family     \$20

Single     \$15

Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113