

December 2001

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Thanks for the Thanks

By Pat Coupar

As promised in last month's newsletter, Parks Victoria staff at Warrandyte State Park gave Fowspians a day to remember.

In this International Year of the Volunteer it was Warrandyte's way of saying thankyou to the volunteers who support the rangers in the care and protection of the Warrandyte State Park and local environment.

In keeping with most of the weekends this spring, the weather on Sunday 18th November was cool and wet. But the wintry conditions did not deter around 16 Fowspians who turned up at the depot for the start of our mystery tour.

It had been advertised as a visit to the Yarra Ranges National Park, but the exact details of our tour were not divulged until we were on the bus. Our host for the day was Warrandyte's Ranger-in-Charge Andy Nixon, who also drove the minibus – with the skill of a professional bus driver.

First stop was the Parks Vic. Depot at -Woori Yallock to pick up ranger Joanne Antrobus. Jo works two days per week at Warrandyte, but the rest of her time is taken up with her duties at Yarra Ranges National Park where she has been working for over two years. Her knowledge of the area is extensive and we were fortunate to have Jo along as our tour guide.

Established in 1995, the Yarra Ranges National Park is enormous – 76,000 hectares, 84% of which is Designated Water Supply Catchment Area. In order to protect this high quality water supply and sensitive natural environments, public access is restricted to most of the Park which is jointly managed with Melbourne Water.

We were indeed privileged when pulling up at a formidable locked gate, Jo alighted from the bus, took out her keys and unlocked the metal gate allowing us to enter the O'Shannassy's Catchment. It felt very special and it was.

As Andy drove slowly along the broad management track, we absorbed the majesty of the cool temperate rainforest.

At O'Shannassy's Weir we stopped and set foot on sacred ground. After a quick cuppa we went for a walk beside the empty and abandoned aqueduct. The track sliced the forest of giants. We were surrounded by the lush greenness of mighty Mountain Ash and towering Tree-ferns – a powerful living oxygen-making biomass. The drizzly rain that accompanied our walk seemed somehow fitting for such an environment.

After this spiritual fulfilment it was time to fill our bellies at the Wild Thyme Café in Warburton where the pampering continued. A large table had been prepared and set aside for us and with a large variety of dishes on the menu, we were well catered for, including plenty of red and white wine to wash down the feast.

Following lunch the tour continued with a slightly more subdued bunch of Fowspians. But everyone was wide awake for the next treat in store – a visit to Healseville Sanctuary, and in particular a meeting with the head keeper of mammals.

We were given a short talk about the Tuan breeding program and shown some slides. Then we were taken behind the scenes to the mammal breeding house where meals are prepared for the various mammals and the breeding boxes are

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Thanks for the Thanks cont'd.

kept. It was the first time most of us have been close to a live Tuan. The animal we were shown in the box was a male – a magnificent creature with a resplendent black brushy tail.

The Healseville Tuan breeding program has been very successful. The animals, though, are not released back into the wild since it is habitat destruction that is their main threat. Instead the

Healseville bred Tuans are passed on to other zoos for educational purposes.

After wandering round in circles for a while we met up for a coffee before making our way back to the minibus and home.

It had been a great day, full of surprises. Thanks to Andy for conceiving the idea and organising the tour and for driving the bus. And thanks also to Jo for showing us her 'other' Park.

True Spring

By Joan Broadberry

True Spring in the Middle Yarra Timelines Calendar, is illustrated with a beautiful photograph of Bulbine Lilies (*Bulbine bulbosa*). This calendar, devised by Glen Jameson, divides the year not into four, but into six seasons. They are: early spring, true spring, high summer, late summer, early winter and deep winter. These six seasons much more accurately reflect the cycle of our Southern Australian bushland, than do the spring, summer, autumn and winter we borrowed from the Northern Hemisphere. This mind-blowing concept, shifts the very walls of our thinking. Each of the six seasons covers two months.

True spring is October and November.

On the 25th of October, the mid week of true spring in the Yarra Valley, Helen Moss led a morning walk at Hodgkins Ridge Reserve, Croydon. Most walkers were regular FOWSP nursery workers. Part of the reserve had been recently burnt, and the understory is very open. Although, sadly, there were many weeds, we were treated to a wonderful display of native wildflowers that kept our eyes scanning the edges of the paths.

True spring is the kingdom of lilies. We enjoyed them in profusion: white Milkmaids



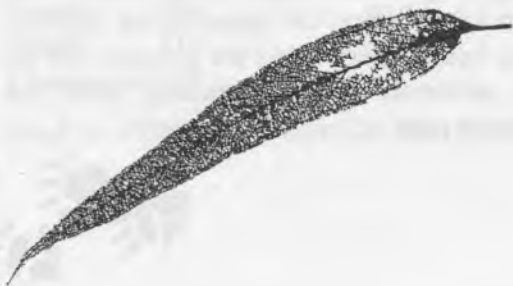
(*Burchardia umbellata*), purple Chocolate Lilies (*Dichopogon strictus*), Twining Fringe-lilies (*Thysanotus patersonii*) and of course the yellow Bulbines which illustrate October and November on the Timelines Calendar mentioned above.

We also discovered a variety of orchids, including one of the most densely flowering patches of the Common Bird Orchid (*Chiloglottis valida*), I had ever seen. Another hillside was a mass of bright yellow Tiger Orchids (*Diuris sulphurea*). But orchids are more often secretive than showy. October brings the smaller finger orchids that only the sharpest eyes can find. Our group was up to the task, spying both the Bronze and Tiny Caladenias (*Caladenia transitoria* and *C. pusilla*). There were Sun Orchids (*Thelymitra* sp.) a plenty, but their flowers would not allow us in. Somehow the very special leek orchids Helen wanted to show us, had disappeared; a sobering reminder of how vulnerable plants can be.

During the two hour stroll we found many more wildflowers including Grass Trigger Plants (*Stylidium graminifolium*), Yam Daisy (*Microseris lanceolata*), Spur Velleia (*Velleia paradoxa*) and the first of the Blue Pincushions, (*Brunonia australis*).

On behalf of the group Helen, thank you once again for your deft guiding.

For those who are interested in learning more about the six seasons, the Timelines Calendar is available from Nillumbik and Manningham Councils. A further source of information is to contact Alan Reid, who originally developed the idea. He can be found at the Timelines Centre, 240 Burns Rd., Glenburn 3717 or alan_reid@telstra.easymail.com.au.



The Eden Project

By Val Polley

Britain's top tourist attraction is proving so popular that organisers are asking people to stay at home - for the time being (The Age 8th September). But if you intend travelling to England in the near future, do put visiting The Eden Project on your list of things to do.

I had visited the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall in 2000 during a UK visit. These traditional Victorian gardens on a grand scale had been allowed to fall into neglect until some keen and enterprising gardeners took it upon themselves to 'recover' them from the disrepair into which they had fallen. Greenhouses, pineapple houses, fountains, courtyards, forests and lakes are gradually being restored to their former grandeur and the gardens are amongst the most visited in the UK. One of those responsible, Tim Smit then turned to another project designed to encourage us to understand and celebrate the world we live in and inspire us to action. This has evolved into The Eden Project.

So what is The Eden Project? Arriving in Cornwall in early June this year, we followed the signs near St Austell and arrived in a large 'park and ride' car park and were directed to a bus. This took us to the edge of the enormous ex-china clay pit in which the project is located. We then followed a path down to the visitor centre. The Project is so popular there are often long queues but there are signs saying how long it will take and entertainers to keep you amused while you shuffle slowly forward. The visitor centre is a long low building with walls of rammed earth and lots of informative messages. Once through you are able to take in the dimensions of the pit and the size of the two enormous greenhouses (biomes) that house tropical and temperate plants. Some facts:

- The pit is 60m deep covering an area of 23 football pitches.
- 2,000 rock anchors stabilise the walls.
- 85,000 tonnes of soil has been made using china clay waste and organic waste.
- Over 135,000 plants of approx. 4,500 species have been planted (and are still being planted).
- The biomes are the largest geodesic lean-to greenhouses in the world (they are huge).

- The biomes use 'pillows' of transparent foil so the biomes weigh only slightly more than the air they contain (they appear very light and airy).
- Cost of entry - £9.50 per adult and Seniors £7.50 (\$A27 and \$A20 approx.)

The Eden Project Mission Statement is: 'To promote the understanding and responsible management of the vital relationship between plants, people and resources, leading to a sustainable future for all'.

What is Eden all about? Basically its role is to educate, inform and enthral. It demonstrates that environmental awareness is about quality of life, that 'environment' is shorthand for issues that impact on us from the food we eat and the clothes we wear to the weather we enjoy. The gardens and displays at Eden are not just about the plants they feature, but plants used to focus on the world they represent and the politics of those worlds. The plants are chosen to tell a story of how people manage their land to meet their needs and conserve their environment, of science, food security, clean technology and improved health.

What has resulted though is an exciting mix of garden, conservation project, art, the theatre and plants. As you walk down the pathways that take you past the various exhibits, there are art works and messages that seek to inspire and evoke images and explore problems. There were clusters of eye-catching silk banners in vibrant colours throughout the area, mosaic paths, sculptures, water features and an amazing hemp fence. The day we were there the theme was paper. A number of yurts (circular tents) dotted through the area were the focus of workshops, the primary ones producing beautiful 3D leaf forms of osier twigs and paper which once dry were to be painted and form the basis of a future art work. The children were totally involved in this activity, tearing up huge sheets of thin white paper and pasting it onto the forms which then dotted the surrounding lawns like pale ghostly fallen leaves from a giant tree.

The primary destination for most visitors is the huge Humid Tropics Biome. It is 240m long 55m high and 110m wide which will allow the tropical rainforest trees it contains to reach their full potential. The air is kept between 18°C and 25°C and there are misters and a waterfall to keep the air moist. The Eden team has visited most areas of the world in order to learn more about the plants they use and their lifestyle and a number of

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The Eden Project cont'd

partnership projects have resulted. On our visit we were swept along within a long column of people, moving along the curving pathways up slopes to the huge waterfall. We passed through rainforest, past a Malaysian house and garden, sugar, spices, bamboo, rubber plants, bananas, rice, cocoa and chocolate. We read lots of information about the plants we were looking at and their importance, either to their local communities or to the world. Ample information was provided, written in a very absorbable and interesting way without being 'dumbed down' or condescending.

From this biome we progressed to the less crowded Warm Temperate Biome where we found Mediterranean plants such as vines, olives cork trees and citrus. There were also plants from South Africa and California (interestingly the only Australian plant I saw, a Banksia, was in a flower garden setting - I haven't found out why they have no interest in our distinctive Australian flora. Perhaps it is due to the emphasis on where plants and humans interact eg food, clothing, housing???).

The rest of the pit area is known as the Open Air Biome and here one finds the wild plants of Cornwall - plants for rope and fibre, tea, plants for fuel, plants in myth and folklore, etc. These open area plantings are still very much in their infancy. The winter and spring had been very damp and cool and some areas had only just been planted and in others the plants have not grown as quickly as might have been the case had the weather been more beneficial.

One of the beauties of the Project is that it will go on growing and evolving, it will be interesting

to return in a few years time to see how it has changed. It was a formidable task for the horticultural team, the sides of the quarry are very steep and stabilising it to make planting places has presented many challenges. Now it remains to be seen if trees and plants can grow and flourish.

One exits the site through the cafe and shop (of course!). Even here the messages are reinforced, all round the cafe are information signs about plants that produce the beverages you are drinking and the food you are eating - tea, coffee, potatoes, wheat for example. The shop sells sourced gifts made of sustainably produced plants from around the globe. The queues waiting at the tills testified to the quality, of the products they were selling.

We came away very stimulated and excited by all we had seen. The Project has certainly caught the public imagination. It has been receiving large numbers of visitors and has contributed hugely to the local economy. This has been most important because of the impact of foot and mouth disease on the tourist trade as most of the footpaths in Cornwall and Devon were closed and movements restricted. Small American cruise ships are calling into Fowey, the nearest harbour, to take in the Project. For something very much in its infancy the Project has stimulated a lot of interest and discussion about conservation issues in the press and other media.

You can visit the virtual Eden Project through its web site www.edenproject.com or www.edenproject.co.uk. But if you're visiting the UK do try and see real Eden, it's very worthwhile.

Library Latest

If you loose your newsletter, do not despair. A copy of each month's newsletter will now be kept in the library for reference.

Also Fowspian Joy Dahl has offered to donate her copies of Habitat Australia, the journal of the Australian Conservation Foundation, to our library. Habitat Australia is published bi-monthly

Committee Report for AGM Sunday 2nd December 2001, 4.30pm

Changes to committee

There weren't really any changes this year, except that Marie Krause who has continued organising the FOWSP trailer roster, each month & for extra festivals. Judy Green has taken charge of the FOWSP library and book database.

Ray Clarke has done an excellent job, assiduously producing regular and detailed Treasurer's reports. Pat Coupar continues her sterling efforts with 11 cheerful and informative newsletters a year.

Membership & Members

We have enjoyed a good 10% expansion in our membership from 186 to 209 members (with 25 complimentary newsletters each month). Each year many members fail to renew, so this is a particularly good result.

At the beginning of the year Pat Coupar & Betty Oke received Australia Day 2001 Community Awards. Recently, Olive Walters received a well-deserved Volunteers award from Manningham City Council.

FOWSP didn't attend the "Friends Network" biannual conference at Wilson's Prom. Perhaps 2003??

Flora had 300 people attend at her place for the Open Garden Scheme in May and Bev and John Hanson opened their garden and bush block for Trust for Nature's Bush Month, in October.

Grants

We received \$14,700 Volunteer Groups Grant for nursery improvement, extension of shade house & watering system.

25,000 Biolink plants were propagated at the nursery. The Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (ATCV) pricked out plants with bulk of work from Thursday volunteers. Greencorps planted back in July. We also received grants for Tuan nesting boxes and for new, detailed plant brochures. The nest boxes are well on their way, some have already been constructed and painted, ready for use. The brochures are currently being organised for printing next year. The only grant we didn't get, as usual, was the Canoes and Equipment grant (see November newsletter).

Nursery

The year began with 36,000 seedlings and ended the year with 50,000 ~ 60,000 seedlings. The new large nursery polyhouse arrived and was constructed in September - planned and organised by Cathy Willis.

Thursday Activities & Walks

Propagation mornings continued most Thursdays except for:

Blue Tongue Bend walk; Bend of Islands walk; Burgan Trial at Black Flat; Fourth Hill wildflowers and rabbit guards; Bruce Fuhrer's Fungi walk back in June

In September we had plant pricking out with Jason Horlock from Greening Australia., while Melanie Birtchnell led propagators on a walk to encourage them in wildflower photography.

There was a walk at Hochkins Ridge in October, with Helen Moss and an excursion to Kinglake & Tourourrong Reservoir Park including a walk with amiable Ranger, Stuart Judd in November.

Activities

- A canoe trip in February with dozen of contented FOWSPians. – don't miss next years!
- Bat trapping & species study, 39 trapped, 6 species, one evening in February.
- Slide night in March, Andrew Picone (from CROEG) spoke enthusiastically on the Goolengook forests in Far East Gippsland (Errinundra Plateau & Long-Footed Potoroos).
- Antarctica & Macquarie Island slide night & BBQ on Friday May 11th, with Kath Andrew and Peter Humble.
- Excursion to CRISP nursery in Ringwood in July.
- David Cameron's walk in Chase Reserve, in September.
- Andy Nixon's slide night re South Africa.
- One Tree Hill walk with Cam Beardsell, looking at Rosella Orchids.

Several FOWSPians went to Kurth Kiln State Park, near Gembrook, for a guided walk and picnic, with their local Friends group. And there was the Parks Vic day out to Warburton & Healesville on a Sunday in November.

Fauan surveys occurred (including powerful owls), near the river with Parks Vic rangers from May to September. And a koala count.

Festivals

We took the trailer to three festivals this year : Warrandyte Festival March 24th & 25th. First year with trailer; ParksVic festival at Albert Park in May; Eltham Festival (Edendale Farm) in November.

Many FOWSPians attended the reenactments and fun of the Gold sesquicentenary (150 years) celebrated on June 30th.

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Green Wedge Seminars

Black Swamp Wallabies, Insects and Fungi for biological control of weeds. Manningham's Environmental overlays (Libby Ward). Management of Manningham's Bushland (Jane Pammer). Getting to know weed weaknesses (Randall Robinson). Bat Nesting Boxes (Robert Bender). Orchid Propagation for Bushland Regeneration (Rob Cross).

Garden Planted for a variety of Birds, on this Thursday, December 6th, with Alan Reid.

Special Events

- March 2001, first ever Colour edition of newsletter, boasting 35,00 plants propagated from local seed!
- FOWSP Banner painted and designed for Warrandyte 2001 festival, by Lee Speedy. Conserving Warrandyte FOWSP, Join in! Themes chosen were icons of Warrandyte:

Kookaburra, leaves of Red & Long-leaf Box trees, Echidna and to match with 3 colour theme of sky high, human heights and ground level.

- In June, we organised wording and printing of postcards and t-shirts. 3 postcards, using Mike and Pat's photos of frogs and 2 beautiful Yarra River scenes. Lee and Geoff organised the design and printing of FOWSP t-shirts in 3 practical colours: blue, green and cream.
- There was also a very low-key and unofficial FOWSP camp held at the Grampians.
- September ~ Biodiversity Month. Minister for Environment and Conservation, Sheryl Garbutt handed out awards for International Year of Volunteers 2001. We received orange certificates, orange mugs and orange badges!

Beyond Touroorong

By Cathy Willis and JR

Many years ago FOWSP had a fantastic day out at Plenty Gorge. Our guide for the day was ranger Stuart Judd. A couple of years later one of our favourite Warrandyte rangers, Steve Anderson moved to Kinglake National Park, and suggested we come for a visit. After the success of the Plenty trip we jumped at the idea. Many FOWSPians will remember what a good day it was.

So when the idea for a day trip to a different area of Kinglake popped up again we remembered that Stuart had moved there a while ago. (There could be a pattern emerging here.)

We rang Kinglake, but instead of Stuart we were put on to Tony Fitzgerald – no connection with Warrandyte as far as we know. Tony only took about a minute to say he'd love to help us organise an outing and suggested the Touroorong Reservoir Catchment. Where?

As fate and the Parks Vic. roster system would have it, it was Stuart who ended up leading our walk. The weather was perfect as about a dozen of us wended our way up a steep track around the side of the reservoir, serenaded by birds, which were enjoying the sun as much as we were.

Situated behind Whittlesea we knew the area would hold some surprises for us, and it wasn't long before we found one. Having got above the depressing Sweet Vernal Grass, we came to a beautiful open track edge full of treasures including

an extremely rare and restricted plant – Creeping Grevillea (*Grevillea repens*). A couple of members of the group also found a 'different' looking Leek orchid (*Prasophyllum* sp.) The jury is still out on this one. Much photo taking later, Stuart decided to leave the track and lead us down a slope to a beautiful ferny creek, which we followed back to the reservoir.

It was fairly hard going in places – no real tracks and dense vegetation. The group paused several times for a rest, and for an excuse to lie down and appreciate the tranquility. It also gave us a chance to absorb Stuart's information about fire, disturbance and succession; feral pigs and deer; bandicoots and records of Spotted Quoll; bird observations; and a host of other interesting snippets.

Stuart had been tracking our progress with a GPS (global positioning system). One member of the group (no names BG) seemed alphabetically challenged in regard to such things, including mobile phones, satellite phones and cruise control!

As the saying goes all good things come to an end and that was the case. We passed back out through the 'hallowed gates' of the catchment and returned to the real world enriched for the experience.

Many thanks to both Tony and Stuart for all their efforts.

As it happens Steve Anderson is now working at Uluru..... anyone for organising a day trip?



OCTOBER ON

By B.G

Trailer Two

Following its use at the October market, the 'Friends' trailer/stall was packed up then towed to its storage site by Peter Curry. He didn't do it single-handed of course, his son Patrick helped.

Members 'Manning'

Seen helping at the stall on the same day was committee member Lee Speedy who was rostered on with Marion Thomson, Neal Tessier, Betty Oke, Kerri Fairley and Antje Bauer.

'Field' Friend

On October 9th Maroondah Leader Newspaper had a mention of one of our regular Thursday helpers, Marion King. Marion was a founding member of the Ringwood Field Naturalist Club over forty years ago and is still active. The youngest member of the Club is Marion's granddaughter Emily. The Club organises field trips every month. Interested? Ring 9801 6946.

November News

On Thursday 22nd November, ranger, David Van Bockel led a 'Briza pull' in a special area of Fourth Hill near the end of Tunnel Street. On their first 'Briza pull' were: Sally, Kelly and friend and several regulars.

Nillumbik News

A petition has been circulated by Kath (of Antarctica Peninsula fame) for a walking track from: Melways ref. M23C9 to M23F2 (approximately).

Fuhrer Facts

In 1968 Bruce Fuhrer was involved in the book 'Flowers and Plants of Victoria'. As part of the preparation, Bruce took about 60,000 slides. Recently Bruce collaborated with Margaret Corrick on the book 'Wildflowers of Victoria'. This was when Bruce looked at his slides again and realised that virtually none were reusable (for technical reasons), so new photos were taken.

One thing that this brought home to Bruce was how much land had been cleared since he had taken the original photos – about 80% of the areas where he had taken photos were gone (vegetatively, I presume B.G).

Full Name Footnote

The Melanie who led our local photographic walk on Thursday October 4th was actually Melanie Birtchnell. Melanie has been involved in quite a few of our activities recently.

As Ye Sow, So Shall Ye Reap

Re genetic modification (G.M) "The Insurance Industry says it is reluctant to insure farmers, biotechnology and food companies for claims involving genetically modified foods.

Insurance Council spokesman, Rod Frail said: it is virtually impossible to assess the risks down the track. Two of Australia's biggest farm insurers, C.G.U and Elders, have confirmed their uneasiness with G.M crops."

"A major global re-insurer, Swiss Reinsurance, said genetically engineered organisms were a bad long-term risk."

"Farmers, consumers and food companies are suing Aventis Crop Science over its insecticide corn Starlink. The corn was approved for feedstock, but not human consumption, but found its way into human food last year."

"The insurers fear a repeat of a situation similar to the Wittenoom asbestos disaster, in which mining companies were sued for millions of dollars in damages by workers who contracted cancer years after being exposed to the deadly material."

Con's Crew

A 'summer crew' led by group leader Con Cosmos starts at the Park on Monday 3rd December.

Grandchild Greeting

Bill Roxburgh (our seed-sorter) has acquired a first grandchild, Lucy. Congratulations.

Rapid Replacement

Due to a family accident our Nursery Manager was unavailable on Thursday 29th November. Cathy Willis stepped in as a premium replacement.



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Victorian Christmas-bush (*Prostanthera lasianthos*)

As its name suggests this small tree belongs to the mint family (Lamiaceae). When crushed its dark green serrated leaves give off a pleasant minty aroma. Sprays of white flowers dotted with purple and orange adorn this tree in December and January. Best seen along the river track at Pound Bend Reserve and in damp gullies on Fourth Hill.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Family \$20

Single \$15

Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113