

June 2002

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

The Spice of Life

By Pat Coupar

Thursdays have taken on a new look in recent months, or rather reverted to an old look, with the return of ranger-led activities. While the propagation mornings continue each week as before, on some Thursdays there is now a choice and an opportunity for members to become involved in a diverse range of activities in various areas of the Park and northern reserves.

Many of these organised events are actually following up work carried out by the 'Friends' over the last ten or so years. Such as the recent ivy pull with ranger David Van Bockel. This took place at Fourth Hill in the vicinity of Wildcat Gully where Fowspians had held annual ivy pulls over several years. But since the decline (through lack of interest) in Sunday activities, this has ceased, consequently some of the ivy had begun to grow back.

Likewise with the pulling of young *Pittosporum* at Timber Reserve. This was following up on the work done by Save the Bush crew about eight years ago when hundreds of large adult trees were killed by drilling and filling.

An ongoing activity that has created much interest is the nest box project. Last year FOWSP obtained a grant from Parks Victoria for the construction of nest boxes. Under the direction of Ranger David 'Frankie' Farrar, Fowspian Geoff Speedy - who has devoted much time to getting

this project up and running - and some other interested members, are now establishing the nest boxes in trees throughout the Park. (See Frankie's article in this newsletter). Frankie is also running other fauna activities including a Powerful Owl survey.

A couple of months ago there was a 'Broom Pull' on Scotchman's Hill with Ranger-in-Charge Andy Nixon. This too was a follow up on previous FOWSP broom pulls on the hill, which, incidentally, is the highest point in Warrandyte.

Ranger Cam Beardsell led us on excursion to Rifle Range, one of the northern reserves which are managed by Warrandyte State Park, giving many people the chance to visit this floristically rich little-known area of bush. (See report in this newsletter).

Coming up on the program are a *Cassinia* pull at Timber Reserve - reasons for removing this native species will be explained at a later date, a continuation of our Burgan Trial at Black Flat, and fern planting at Norman Reserve.

For those members who are unable to make any of the Thursday activities, the Sunday afternoon propagation group is continuing under the guidance of Geoff Speedy and the nursery manager on the first Sunday of every month.

They say that variety is the spice of life. With the continued success of these ranger-led, and other, activities there looks like being plenty of spice on offer for all Fowspians for a while.

FOSCCERS Tour of The Chase

By Steve Munro

On May 26 the Friends of Stony Creek Catchment (FOSCCers) toured the Chase Reserve. The reserve is a wonderful remnant of native bushland, one of the most significant stands of remnant bush in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Many FOWSP members may recall, and indeed may have been involved in, the campaign that led to the creation of Chase Reserve. Many of the FOSCCers on Sunday were relatively new residents, and it was good to hear the history of successful local action that created a sanctuary for a family of Wedge-tailed Eagles within the Melbourne metropolitan area.

Much of the bushland within the Chase is fairly free of weeds and introduced species. Local botanist David Cameron helped the FOSCCers identify a number of native plant species. In the dry forest on the ridge lines were a number of native peas – Parrot Pea and Bitter Pea. Also common were Heaths: Cranberry Heath and



Honeypot Heath, the latter with its attendant company of ants. Gold-dust Wattles and Chinese Scrubs were also present.

Down in the wet sclerophyll and riparian woodland there were a number of fungi and mosses: a parasol and a black lily fungus and Swan Neck moss. Two species of European mushrooms, one a member of the family of hallucinogenic mushrooms, sheltered under a North American Pine Tree. Sadly, blackberries clogged much of the creek bank.

David showed us the eagle's nesting tree, and the remains of their nest lying on the ground after the tree branch bearing it snapped some time ago. Hopefully the eagles will return in a future nesting season

Friends of Stony Creek Catchment continue to meet on the last Sunday of each month, at 1 pm on Colan Rd in North Warrandyte. On Sunday 30 June 2002, the group will do some waterwatch training, and learn weeding techniques. FOWSP members are welcome to participate, you do not have to live in the Stony Creek Catchment area. Further activities after June are: Sunday 28 July; exploration of the aqueduct, weeding and waterwatch testing: Sunday 25 August; weeding techniques and waterwatch testing.

Brush-tailed Phascogale Management Update.

By Ranger, David Farrar (Frankie).

Nest boxes continue to be established strategically throughout the Warrandyte State Park, in appropriate vegetation communities. The favoured Phascogale vegetation communities are Red Box and Stringybark habitat with light vegetation cover on ground and a mix of on ground timber cover.

With the help from Friends Group members Marie, Terry and Robyn, and also with the help of our new Australian Green Corps team lead by Mark Gardner, we now have more than thirty nest boxes established throughout the Park (three designs). Another twenty are to be established in new sites in the Park over the next month.

The good news is we are obtaining valuable information so far from having nest boxes established in trees throughout the Park. For example, nest box number 15 established in Koornong Reserve two years ago showed recently the start of a Phascogale nest and reasonably fresh scats inside the box.

I picked up a fresh road killed Phascogale last month, 100 metres south of Yeoman's road in North Warrandyte. The animal looked to be a dispersing male in great condition apart from



meeting a vehicle head on! I have picked up another eight Brush-tailed Phascogale in and around the Park in this way over the last five years.

Unfortunately cats have also shown us that Phascogales are in the Warrandyte State Park and the two Phascogale that have been prepared by a taxidermist, for educational purposes in the Park office are the proof of that. I will be working on strategies to reduce cat, fox and dog attacks on Brush-tailed Phascogale over the next twelve months.

However, my strong feeling is that the Brush-tailed Phascogale appears to be secure in Warrandyte State Park. Observations by Friends Group members and other Park staff are proving Phascogale are showing up in all areas of the Park. Just recently I found a fresh scat on leaf litter on the ground in the Timber Reserve while placing nest boxes in trees with our team of ten Green Corps and a new Friends Group member Robyn. You just have to be in the right spot at the right time and take the time to look for the signs. Please keep the Brush-tailed Phascogale sightings coming in!

An Autumn Weeding Excursion

By Joan Broadberry

On Thursday May 2nd twenty FOWSPians made the rough trip by four wheel drive vehicle to a remote gully in the Rifle Range Reserve, Christmas Hills. Upon hearing the name I felt a little nervous, but apparently the gun club had been disbanded some time ago, and we were in no danger of becoming target practice. The regular Thursday nursery crew teamed up with nine green corps workers under the leadership of Mark Gardner, with the aim of clearing the gully of Sweet Pittosporum.

Under the tutelage of Cam Beardsell we soon began to learn more about the area. The vegetation type is known as valley heathy forest. Once pointed out, its brighter green canopy was quite different to the olive green canopy of the red box forest. Apparently the former grows on Devonian soil and the latter likes Silurian dirt. (But don't quote me on any of the technicalities.)

Almost as soon as the cars were parked, some keen orchid eyes spied the tiny wine coloured flowers of the Fringed Midge Orchid. Each flower on the spike lasts for only one day. Then more shouts as the Eastern Tiny Greenhood was spotted. This exquisite orchid is unusual in that the individual greenhood flowers face inwards towards the stem.

Orchid homage over, we picked up our tools and set out to find the Pittosporum. The group had not walked far before we came upon quite large stands



of this environmental weed. Over the last twenty years or so it has gradually infested the wetter areas of the gully. Three techniques were used in eradicating the Pittosporum. The small plants were pulled, the medium ones were snipped and dabbed with Roundup and the larger ones were drilled and poisoned. It is amazing how much thirty people can achieve in a short time. Under the keen eye of our smallest worker, Lauren, aged just 12 months, who supervised from a backpack on her mother's shoulders, the area was cleared in about an hour.

The group was fortunate to be working outdoors on one of Melbourne's magnificent autumn days. Our reward was a leisurely lunchtime spent soaking up the sunshine. The restless Ben, ever mindful of his role as a representative of the 4th estate, spent time interviewing the green corp workers.

After lunch we drove over to nearby One Tree Hill to plant the rare *Senecio odoratus* inside a fenced area. The final stop was at Watsons Creek for a last chat and look around, and then back to our homes.

The day's mixture of work, fun and enjoyment of the bush was in exactly the right proportions. There is almost nothing to compare with the feeling of satisfaction that comes from a successful assault on weeds in the company of like minded friends. Forget pills, tonics and visits to the psychiatrist. Try weeding with FOWSP instead!

Coming Soon

Over the next few months we will be reporting on a Land for Wildlife Field Day entitled 'Burgan, Bellbirds and Eucalypt Dieback' that was held on Saturday May 25th at a 62 acre property in Bouchiers Rd, Kangaroo Ground. There was considerable interest in the subject, reflected by a turnout of over 50 people.

The program was organised by Kate Mackie a Land for Wildlife Extension Officer from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE). Kate introduced the event and gave a brief overview of the topics to be covered. She emphasised that the burgan, bellbirds, eucalypt dieback association was a complicated issue and pointed out that correlation and cause are not necessarily the same thing. Overall she advised caution and warned against making Burgan the demon.

Speakers at the Field Day were:

- Richard Loyn from NRE on 'Bell Miners and their role in eucalypt dieback'.
- David Van Bockel, Ranger from Warrandyte State Park, on 'Burgan thinning trials at WSP'.
- Lincoln Kern from Practical Ecology on 'Managing for a balanced ecosystem'.
- (unshceduled) David Cameron, botanist, on 'What is Burgan'.

After lunch there was a tour of the property and discussion of issues.

Next Month

Part One will report on Richard Loyn's talk on the Bell Miners and their role in eucalypt dieback.

Fungus Foray at Jumping Creek

Warrandyte State Park (11 May 2002)

Leader: Bruce Fuhrer

Report Pat & Ed Grey

On a fine, warm, Saturday morning a group of Friends from Braeside Park, Kalkarook Park and Warrandyte State Park met with Bruce Fuhrer (photographer, author and fungi expert) for a fungus foray at Jumping Creek (Warrandyte SP). Bruce's gloomy predictions that there would be no fungi because of the dry weather were effectively put to rest – 61 species were seen on the walk.

A number of Agarics (Mushrooms) were up – a brown scaly capped species (*Agaricus augustus*) and the smooth capped brown forest species. Clumps of them pushed their way through the woody litter. They could be identified by the ring (remains of the veil that covered the gills when the species was developing) on the stem and the chocolate brown gills, coloured by maturing spores, that were free from the stem. Nearby were some similar-looking species with smooth but pinker coloured caps, and could be identified (by Bruce) as a native *Lepista* by the pinkish bloom of the spores on the gills and the fleshy stem (no ring). Then we moved out of the car park!

Perhaps the most splendid specimens seen were the sturdy, slimy *Cortinarius archeri*. The domed caps were a wonderfully deep blue purple colour that glistened in the sunlight. The caps of older specimens were flattening out and gradually turning brown from the centre. Unlike most Cortinares, the veil (which later forms the ring on the stem) was thick and membranous rather than the usual cobwebby type. This is one of the identifying features for the species and differentiates it from other slimy-capped purple cortinares.

A few caps of the luminescent Ghost Fungus (*Omphalotus nidiformis*) were spotted. These large, white gilled species cluster around the base of trees, glow green in the dark and cause root rot. The caps vary in colour from white and cream to blue and black, sometimes all on the same cap.

Empty pupa cases of emerged Goat Moths lay scattered beneath trees in some areas, so we hunted under nearby wattles for the Vegetable Caterpillars (*Cordyceps*) that parasitise the pupae underground and then put up fruiting bodies like small clubs or twigs. But we didn't find any.

On the underside of rotting wood we discovered a tan brown paint fungus (*Hyphodontia australis*), that, under a 10x hand lens, looked incredibly knobby, and a white *Poria* (a pored fungus lying flat on the substrate) with incredibly large pores for its size. On another piece of rotting wood there were some brilliantly coloured dark blue-green discs (*Chlorociboria aeruginosum*). The fungal threads (mycelium) of this species stains the wood bluish and was often prized by carpenters for furniture.

In another gully, *Mycena cystidiosa* had just started fruiting. They have a bell-shaped cap, dark purple brown at the peak and becoming paler towards the margin. Even when this species is not fruiting, it may be detected by the masses of white mycelial threads woven throughout the litter. The name, cystidiosa, is derived from the fact that there are large, non fertile cells on the edge of the thick white gills. We looked through a 10x hand lens but they were not visible at that low magnification.

Amongst the fallen bark of a senescing eucalypt, Bruce pointed out *Leucopaxillus eucalyptorum*, which is a medium-sized species with a brown cap, depressed in the middle and pale, slightly decurrent gills (the genus used to be known as *Clitocybe*). Often under the bark litter there is a thick layer of its white mycelium mixed with soil. This genus contains species with antibiotic content (clitocybin) and, therefore, tends to hang around a long time.

On the way back via the nature trail and in a stand of Burgan, we came across a patch of the "marshmallow" fungus (*Fistulinella mollis*), a soft, slimy bolete (pores instead of gills under the cap) with a pale brown cap and pink, soft pores.

Of course, this is only a selection of what we saw and only a brief summary of the incredible amount of information that Bruce imparted. For each species seen, Bruce explained its characteristics and interesting points to help novices identify some of the fungi. This was an extremely informative and enjoyable foray aided by enthusiastic 'spotters'. Thank you Bruce.



Note: A full list of species seen is available from the FOWSP market trailer or the WSP office.

Transitions

By Joan MacMahon

They are all about us – always have been and always will be. Mountains to hills and then plains, teenagers to adults, evening to night, politician to statesman (ok, a rarity), horse power to coal to oil to water to solar, small business to supermarket, typewriters to computers, snail mail to e-mail, minimal damage to the natural world two centuries ago to a world reeling from the onslaught of one species – us.

Some are inevitable, others we have some control over. Some are a step in the right direction, others definitely a hazard to life.

These were my thoughts as I stood with five thousand other folk (if only I could say twenty thousand!) on a green space in the city a few Saturdays ago (May 18). Ken and I were at Batman Park, sandwiched between a murky Yarra and an elevated rail-line, the Yellow Peril and Queens Bridge.

Why this spot? The ALP state conference was being held nearby, apparently within sight and sound of us. I couldn't work out exactly where – surely not the casino?

There was food to buy and so I joined the slow moving queue to be rewarded by the sight of real cups being used for the teas and coffees. Trusted customers. With effort I managed to control my sugar addiction, ignoring the yummy looking cakes and choosing some corn on the cob. Yum!

There was entertainment, no doubt freely given. The RATS theatre group, Killing Heidi and another group I enjoyed but can't remember the name of - mc'd by Rod Quantock in fine form.

I'd better tell you about the real reason we'd come together. To hear those dedicated people who represent various country groups working hard to protect their local bits of forest.

A chap from Hamilton Field Naturalist's told us about a precious remnant near Portland (currently categorised as state forest). I can't remember its name other than it started with a K. Then the Wombat Forest was spoken for as were the forests around Marysville. (It's not easy trying to change the status quo there as the logging community is naturally fearful and antagonistic). Jill Redwood from East Gippsland told some similar stories and we heard from a woman working on forest issues for the Wilderness Society. Bless them all! They did an excellent job highlighting the need for an end to logging old growth forests.

For me the definite highlight of the day was Bob Brown. His speech was short, every word music to my ears. If only our other politicians had his understanding of and respect for nature, and his long term vision.

I am now optimistic that an important transition is well under way – the move to leave old-growth alone, to let it return to the business of evolving, and to conduct our timber production elsewhere.

Did You See?

Anger at green spending cuts

Kerry Taylor, Canberra

Conservation groups and the opposition yesterday accused the Federal Government of chronic underspending on green measures, cutting more than 100 jobs from the Environment Department and hiding increased border patrol costs in the environment portfolio.

Greens senator Bob Brown said the environment was suffering due to increased sea patrols to deter asylum-seekers. More than \$440 million for Customs had turned up in environment expenditures under the item "civil maritime surveillance and response" for the first time in this financial year and in 2002-03, he said. "There's been a massive plundering of environment funding to pay for the government's pursuit of asylumseekers," he said.

Opposition environment spokesman Kelvin Thomson said measures tackling salinity and

greenhouse gases were the big losers in environment spending.

More than \$245 million was promised for measures to cut greenhouse gas emissions in this financial year, but only \$119 million had been spent, he said. More than \$169 million was also to be cut from greenhouse measures over the next five years.

He said there also were cuts in the government's signature environment program, the national action plan on salinity.

"The environment budget is a sorry tale of underspending, cuts and shonky figures," he said.

Budget papers also revealed that 119 jobs would be cut in the Environment Department.

Environment Minister David Kemp denied that the environment was paying for the cost of deterring asylum seekers. The maritime surveillance measure was included with environment expenses due to the role Customs played in detecting oil spills and illegal fishing practices, he said.

He denied there would be any cuts to environmental programs.

Source: *The Age* 16/5/02

"There should be laws regulating the sale of environmental weeds in Victoria"

By Megan Willis

You are being smothered. Outside light fails to penetrate the foliage surrounding you. All moisture has long since evaporated and your fears that your own fate will be that of so many of your comrades is about to be realised.

The definition of an environmental weed is 'an exotic plant that invades native vegetation, adversely affecting the survival of indigenous flora.' These weeds can be of three types:

- a species from overseas
- a species from Australia, but outside their state of origin
- a species outside their area of pre-European distribution

Environmental weeds are threatening Australia's biodiversity. Something must be done. After land clearing, environmental weeds are considered Australia's biggest conservation problem. One simply must ask; why are there no enforced rules regulating the sale and planting of these weeds?

There are over 2,700 invasive plant species in Australia; a massive 73% of these are from ornamental and garden origin. And yet, people continue to buy environmental weeds to plant in their own backyards.

Environmental weeds threaten and reduce Australia's biodiversity by shading and smothering indigenous plants, competing for light, water, nutrients and pollinators, filling natural gaps needed for regeneration and adding the foreign genes needed for hybridisation.

The altered landscape can cause a change in fire behaviour, intensity and frequency and can also change water movements and water tables in the ground. Not only changing the appearance of our land, environmental weeds can change entire landscapes in several ways:

They cause erosion by blocking light to ground cover, thus exposing the surface soil and making it susceptible to erosion. Clog waterways by thriving and causing excess mass in shallows, turning what may have once been a rushing river into a trickling stream. And by biodegrading too rapidly, turning Victoria's skeletal soil into a

mulchy mass that again favours further invasion by environmental weeds,

This vicious cycle continues to turn while the majority of Australians fail to notice and a small minority champion their cause, all too often in vain.

As many State and Shire authorities pour money into weed management programs they often fail to take any proactive action, The Parliament of Victoria does have acts providing environmental weed management in Victoria's public and private land including; The National Parks Act of 1975, The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act of 1988 and The Catchment and Land Protection Act of 1994 (CALP).

But these acts are simply not effective because although the The CALP act does have restrictions providing the prohibition of the sale of environmental weeds, the Victorian Parliament Environmental and Natural Resource Committee also report that these plants continue to be sold in Victorian nurseries and that even more potentially invasive exotic plants are being imported via the rise in internet shopping. The Committee also report that problems arise due to a lack of uniformity in the classification of Plants. In the mean time environmental weeds continue to wreak havoc in Australia's many biomes.

Compare this to Queensland's weed management processes which involve a newly proposed bill which, if passed, will prohibit the sale of Class 3 pests. A list which includes 15 plant species. The bill also proposes regular checks to enforce the prohibition and penalties for those who choose to disobey the proposed law. Restrictive as this may seem to some landowners the laws are necessary as environmental weeds take no notice of fences and are spread by animals, insects and water to name a few.

In order to keep Australia's remnant bushland and other biomes healthy, regulations prohibiting the sale of environmental weeds must be introduced. Not only would this ensure the protection of agricultural land and remnant indigenous ecosystems but also make sure that Australia's growing ecotourism industry remains viable for future generations.

Although we cannot reverse history to prevent all degradation of Australia's land we can act now to prevent further devastation of our greatest asset. Our unique land.

Editor's Note: This is an edited account of a talk given by Megan Willis for her Year 12 English assessment

Worth Repeating

Wordsworth's golden daffodils under a cloud

Nigel Bunyan, Ullswater, England

The "host of golden daffodils" that inspired William Wordsworth to write 'Daffodils' may be lost forever unless a predatory rival is erased from a lake shore in northern England.

For almost two centuries, tourists have trekked to the Lake District in spring to see a yellow carpet of flowers that stretches out "in never-ending line". But that line has been breached as members of a more common, and much larger, species encroach from nearby woodland.

Conservationists are concerned that, unless action is taken, Wordsworth's native daffodil, *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, will be corrupted and hastened towards extinction.

The National Trust regards the matter so seriously that it has called in the Daffodil Society to mastermind a campaign to beat back the invader.

The poet wrote about Ullswater's wild daffodils after coming across them during a walk along the lake shore with his sister, Dorothy. Then, as now, they stood only 15 centimetres high, their distinctive structure defined by the paleness of their perianth.

Their modern-day rivals are of a common, cultivated variety, probably *Narcissus carlton*. They are twice as big and considerably more hardy, having been raised to survive in the coldest of gardens.

The National Trust's senior warden, Ken Ratcliffe, said: "The wild daffodils are an historic feature of Ullswater, a living link back to the times when William Wordsworth roamed the valleys.

"There are around 200 of the common species, and if we don't move them they will eventually take over. They grow much more vigorously and will simply wipe the other ones out. The wild ones will become larger and turn into the more common variety. We plan on taking out the few wild flowers which are beginning to change. We will also move the common ones to another National Trust site where the same variety grows."

The trust's property manager for Ullswater, Judith Derbyshire, said: "We don't know who planted the new daffodils, but they are just across the road from our native species on an embankment.

"If they remain they will cross-pollinate in the next few years. If cross-pollination does occur, it will mean we will have a mixture of both, and the native variety could eventually disappear."

Daffodil Society chairman Jan Dalton visited Glencoyne Bay, also known as Wordsworth Point, to offer advice.

David Matthews, a Daffodil Society member who sits on the Royal Horticultural Society's daffodil and tulip committee, expressed optimism about *Narcissus pseudonarcissus's* chances of survival.

"I think the danger is hypothetical, rather than anything that will actually occur," he said. "It takes between four and five years for a daffodil to go from seed to flower, and even then it needs a lot of luck.

It needs a bee to travel from one group to another. It then needs a successful pollination and a suitable piece of ground on which to fall. As a breeder, I know it's pot luck as to whether a daffodil will then germinate.

Even if the whole process is completed, the wild daffodil would probably retain most of its characteristics because it is the seed parent."

The Telegraph

Source: *The Age* 21/3/02

Tuan Nest Box Monitoring

When: Tuesday June 18th

Where: Black Flat

For more information contact ranger David 'Frankie' Farrar
at WSP office on 9844 2659





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Manna Gum
(Eucalyptus viminalis)

Manna Gums are one of Warrandyte's most majestic trees. Tall and straight with bark that peels in long ribbons leaving elegant creamy-white trunks that loom out of the mist along the river on these cold winter mornings.

The leaves of Manna Gums are one of the major foodplants of koalas and it's flowers attract nectar-feeding birds like the rare swift parrots since recently in Warrandyte.

FOWSP Membership Form

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