

April 2004

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

FOWSP Festival Success

By Pat Coupar

It all began on the Thursday - two days before the festival weekend. The response to our massive autumn sale, at the Warrandyte State Park nursery, was fantastic with many members getting in early for the best bargains

Our nursery manager and many volunteers were kept busy all Thursday morning and again on Saturday and Sunday. It is very encouraging that so many people want indigenous plants for their gardens and bush blocks.

Meanwhile at the festival, boxes of flourishing indigenous plants enticed people to the FOWSP trailer in droves. With a selection of plants for wet and dry areas, there were plenty to choose from. The Spiny-headed Mat-rush proved one of the most popular species, along with Flax-lilies, Austral Indigo and Golden-tip.

Our lush forestry tubes of Tussock Grass (*Poa ensiformis*) drew much attention - some visitors thinking it was Mondo Grass! There was also considerable interest in the Muttonwood plants



which, some people quite correctly commented, looked like Pittosporum.

That we had such healthy plants is a credit to Josh, our nursery manager. To bring them

through the hottest, driest time of the year and

have plants at their peak for an autumn planting is no mean feat. All we need now is some decent rain!

Thanks must go to the hard-working Thursday morning propagators who pricked out, potted up, divided and struck cuttings of those wonderful indigenous Warrandyte plants.

Over the festival weekend 26 new members were signed up. A warm welcome to you all.



FOWSP information trailer at the Warrandyte Festival

Jolly Fish and Puzzling Eucs

By Pat Coupar

It was hot. It was dusty. It was steep (in places), but I wouldn't have missed it. Thursday March 25th was the first of FOWSP's monthly afternoon walks that are to be a regular occurrence.

Commencing after lunch, a small group of us met at Anderson's Creek car park on Gold Memorial Drive. The early arrivals had already been busy bird spotting Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and the like.

Our guide was nursery manager Josh, who showed that he not only knows his plants, but he knows his fish too. Only a few steps from the car Josh drew our attention to the clear, shallow waters of Anderson's Creek where a school of native fish were swimming lazily amongst the rocks of the deeper pools. The fish were of varying sizes and were almost certainly a mixture of Common Galaxias (also known as Common Jollytails) and Climbing Galaxias. Interestingly both species have a marine juvenile stage known as 'whitebait'.



Crossing the creek we headed up the rocky track to Johnson's Mine. On the way we checked out a lone occurrence of the Soft Tree Fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*) growing in a rock shaft. Like everything else around it too was suffering severely from lack of rain, but a tinge of green on the fronds showed it was still alive.

As there was little to see on the ground we turned our attention to the eucalypts. The vegetation on this sheltered side of Fourth Hill is classed as Herb-rich Foothill Forest. We noted that the dominant eucalypts were Narrow-leaved Peppermint, Messmate and Candlebark, but were puzzled by some of the other trees which had features resembling Broad-leaf Peppermint – a species that is not recorded for Fourth Hill. Unfortunately we couldn't obtain fruit or buds to confirm our suspicions.

An interesting shrub that we could identify was the Pale Ballart (*Exocarpos strictus*) a rarer – in Warrandyte anyway – close relative of the common Cherry Ballart (*E. cupressiformis*). Both these species are root parasites.

Despite the dry conditions of the bush, there was still plenty of interesting flora and fauna to see.

The next walk will be on April 23rd after lunch, following the thursday morning propagation. It should not be missed.

How Could You Miss Them?

By Pat Coupar

Some facts on European Wasps (*Vespula germanica*)

- Accidentally introduced into Australia in 1977
- Entered Australia with cargo via New Zealand
- European Wasps destroy vast numbers of native insects
- Most colonies of European Wasps in the northern hemisphere die away in winter, but ours keep expanding, year after year, recruiting more and more queens, rearing more and more workers, growing to a hundred times the size of European colonies.

Source: *Feral Future*, Tim Low



Koala News

By Julie Pryor

On December 25th I was called to a house in Knees Rd. to pick up a female Koala. She was taken to Healesville Sanctuary. Unfortunately it was the usual call - very thin, very weak and sitting on the ground. She was put on a fluid drip, but died over night,

The next call was on February 10th, again it was a female. This little girl was found in a park in Templestowe. She was also sitting on the ground in the usual way, but this time she had a strange smell about her. I took her to a local vet, and she was soon put down. The strange smell was from maggots that had got into her wounds and she was in a very bad way. We do not know how she was injured, but it had happened several days earlier.

On February 19th a Koala came in from Oakland Drive Warrandyte, she was a very old girl. Her teeth had worn down to the gum line, she had arthritis in both elbows, an old head injury was evident and she was blind. This combination is not good for a Koala, so she too was put down.

Then on February 25th I was called to Eltham where a male Koala was causing concern. He was eating Pig Face and daisies in the front yard of a house. The Koala decided to climb a tree, but was not comfortable there and he came down again, only to sit on the knee of a passer by. By the time I arrived the Koala had gone to the top of a gum tree, Nigels Animal Rescue Service was called.

Bob, as the Koala was named, stayed with me for 2 weeks; he was a delight to work with. He was very thin and very weak and weighed 7 kilograms. He was about 3 year old. I managed to get his weight up to 8.16kg, but he was still very weak. I took him to Healesville Sanctuary, where he continued to put on weight, unfortunately he was found dead on the floor of his enclosures weeks later.



Next came Webb on March 2nd. The day after he came in a lump developed under his chin. X Rays showed he had had some type of trauma to his face, but it was

repairing. Unfortunately he was blind and had to be put down. Last week a dead Koala was found on Pound Bend Track.

On a brighter note, Dally has gone to live at Healesville Sanctuary, this was the best place for her as she was not really happy about eating gum leaves and they will be able to watch her diet. (She prefers to eat bark). Campbell is still here, but not for much longer as he is almost ready for release.

A Sugar Glider came in on the Sunday of the Warrandyte Festival, a cat had attacked it and it died 2 days later.

During February I received 2 calls to Koalas - one in Eltham the other in Oban Rd, Nth Ringwood, both animals were very low in trees but they looked OK. As the weather was hot I advised the people to hose the tree above the animals with a pressure to resemble rain drops, not a fine mist as the animal could breath in the water and cause a lung infection. Both Koalas licked the leaves and tree trunk and appreciated the drink. I have not had any reports on these Koalas since.

For the last five weeks a Koala has been frequenting a tree in Doncaster East. He goes away for a day then the next day he is back. He appears to be fine, I have seen him on the ground travelling between trees and I have seen him climb. The tree he keeps returning to has a lot of new growth; maybe this is the big attraction.



Bilby

(*Macrotis lagotis* – “hare-eared big-ear”)

would you like to ?

Now that we have your attention do please consider coming along to some of our committee meetings. Usually held mid-week they start at 7.30pm and usually finish by 9.30pm. Held at various committee members' homes they are relaxed and always finish with a pleasant supper.

A bonus is the chance to hear first-hand what the professionals are doing - our acting ranger-in-charge, Craig Lupton, comes along and provides a report for us.

We'd love a few more people to take on some of the many small jobs which will improve our (already fantastic!) organisation. There are plenty of ways we can help encourage the local residents

and our traders to realise how precious our remnants of original Melbourne are.

Last December two people resigned (Flora as she was moving away and Joan to focus on other aspects of FOWSP) and we've had one addition - the return of Geoff Speedy.

Nobody expects us to attend every meeting - indeed no-one ever does. We have students, part-time and full-time workers and 'retired' folk. So do please give it some thought - maybe you could be available for 3 or 4 evenings a year - whatever you can give will be welcomed.

Interested? Contact any committee member and have a chat or just turn up to the next meeting.

Joan MacMahon

Our Gardening Guide

We still have heaps of these wonderful publications to sell and Joan MacMahon would love some help both in distributing them and in finding new outlets. Currently the following places sell them for us; Warrandyte Post Office, Folk Art (ethnic clothes and crafts at the roundabout), Warrandyte Neighbourhood House, Information Warrandyte, Harvey World Travel (Webb St.), Goldfields Cellars (wine and coffee, next to the newsagency) and The Soil Shop Nursery (off Warrandyte Rd. opposite pound Rd.).

New outlets could be any or all of the following; Beasleys Nursery, Warrenglen Nursery, South Warrandyte Store, the soon to be opening organic food shop and café (in the old Warrandyte cellars building), one of the Wonga Park Shops, one of the Park Orchards shops etc etc.

If you've any more suggestions or time to do some of the leg work please contact Joan on 98443213.

GARDENER'S GUIDE TO INDIGENOUS PLANTING

in Warrandyte and Surrounding Areas



Tip of the Month

Replace Aggies with Indigees

Common Agapanthus (*Agapanthus praecox* ssp. *orientalis*) is an African lily that has become rare in its natural habitat. The plant has been cultivated and hybridised extensively and is a common plant in many Australian gardens. It reproduces prolifically from seed and from rhizomes and will invade bushland.

Indigenous alternatives include Flax-lily (*Dianella* species) and Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*), both of which are available from the Warrandyte State Park nursery.

FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

We meet for propagation and other nursery activities every Thursday morning at 10.00am at the Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10), unless otherwise stated below. When there is no scheduled afternoon activity we often go on a spontaneously organised walk. Propagation takes place from 10.00am to 12 midday followed by lunch. No prior experience necessary - there is always someone available to show you the ropes.

The nursery is open for plant sales (by donation) every Thursday 10.00am to 12md and the first Sunday of each month 2.00pm to 400pm.

Important Notice

Please note the nursery is only open for plant sales during the above times. Some members and non-members have been turning up for plants (and advice) outside these hours without prior arrangement. If you find it impossible to come during official opening times please contact the nursery manager first.



New Prices

Members: 60 cents per forestry tube
Non-members: \$1 per forestry tube

Thursday Afternoon Walks

On the fourth Thursday of every month there will be a short walk (about one hours duration) somewhere in the Park. If you would like to attend either bring your lunch and stay on after the propagation morning or meet at the nursery at 1.00pm.

Walks will take place on: April 23rd
May 28th
June 24th
July 22nd



FOWSP Committee 2004

Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor	<u>Wildlife Rescue</u>	
Ray Clarke	9841 8507	Treasurer	Julie Pryor	9722 1117
Sue Shepherd	9844 3754	Assistant Treasurer		
Peter Curry	9844 0958	Secretary	<u>Market</u>	
Geoff Speedy	9437 0894		Marie Krause	9712 0498
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary		
Mike Coupar	9844 1650			
Melanie Birtchnell			<u>Park Office</u>	9844 2659
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797			
Michelle Hanslow	0402251577		<u>Nursery Manager</u>	0408800026



Manningham City Council Environment Seminars 2004

6th May - Glen Jameson "Stories from the World Parks Congress"

Glen recently returned from the trip of a lifetime, attending the World's Park Congress in South Africa as a representative of the Victorian Rangers Association. He will provide us with a fascinating overview of conservation on a world scale and management issues of the future. Glen Jameson is currently lecturing in Conservation Management at RMIT and running his environmental consulting business, Literate Landscapes, while on a year's leave from Parks Victoria.

3rd June - David Meagher "Bryophytes - Mosses, Liverworts and Hornworts"

Mosses and their allies play an important role in almost every ecosystem in Australia. David will take a closer look at this often overlooked and fascinating group of plants.

David Meagher is a science writer and editor with an active interest in the conservation and ecology of bryophytes. He is co-author of *A Field Guide to the Mosses and Allied Plants of Southern Australia*.

1st July - John White "Bird Friendly Cities"

John will look at the composition and type of habitat in urban woodland parks and open space, its affect on bird populations and how we can help to create bird friendly cities to avoid further species loss.

Dr John White is a Lecturer in wildlife ecology at Deakin University. His recent research has focused on the influence of urbanisation on bird communities.

The seminars are free and no bookings are required.

Supper provided.

Time: 7:30pm

Venue: The Function Room Grand Hotel 120 Yarra Street, Warrandyte. (Melways Ref. 23 E11)

To join us for dinner at the pub before the seminars, book a seat in the Bistro on 9844 1199.

For further information contact:

Cathy Willis on phone: 9840 9122 or cathy.willis@manningham.vic.gov.au

Deadline for May Newsletter is May 2nd

Bush Backyard

Contributions this month from Sandy Jones and
Pat Coupar

Young and Carefree

By Sandy Jones

It was 7.00pm on a February evening when, I ventured out to the back porch to throw away some leftover two-minute noodles. My timing was just right, the local magpie family were seeking out an evening meal and jumped at the chance to have noodles for supper.

But it wasn't long before word got around that leftovers were on offer and every bird wanted in. First the bronzewings arrived one, two, three then four, followed by the rainbow lorikeets who proceeded to let every bird know who was boss.

I watched as the lorikeets picked and probed those noodles and it wasn't long before the food was no more. But it wasn't the disappearing noodles that caught my eye, no it was the young pair of lorikeets who were playing a game of wrestling further along the lawn.

For a good 15 to 20 minutes those two were in a good grip with one another and were in their own little bird world and not noticing they were tumbling down the hill. They weren't bothered by the other birds or had no interest in the noodles

and were just having fun. Nice to be that young and carefree and not have a worry in the world.

But alas, all things must come to an end. A lone cockatoo came and spoiled their fun. I think he wanted to play too but I think my young friends thought he was just a little too

big to wrestle.

I had enjoyed an entertaining half hour.



Pelargonium Feast

By Pat Coupar

We don't have rabbits on our block. Thanks goodness. But it's not all good news. We have several large Brush-tail Possums with insatiable appetites. Not that they eat everything. Quite the reverse – they are very selective. Their absolute favourite food is the native Pelargonium (*Pelargonium australe*), but they also relish Billy Buttons (*Craspedia variabilis*) and Saloop Saltbush (*Einadia hastata*) and they have chomped their way through all my parsley.

Extreme preventative measures need to be taken to preserve the plants. Guards must have a small mesh and be closed at the top and large enough so that no part of the plant can be reach by grabbing hands.

At no time is it safe to remove the guards. Big, healthy robust plants can be demolished in one night. As I have discovered – the hard way.



More Snippets Please

The feedback on this segment has been very positive, but it does rely on you, the members, to keep contributions coming.

Don't forget snippets can be about anything of interest in the environment and do not necessarily have to be about Warrandyte.

Contributions can either be dropped into the editor at 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte or via email at ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au





Ranger's Report

(March 2004)

By Craig Lupton Acting Ranger-in-Charge

Natural Values Management

Rabbit Action Groups

Ranger Cam Beardsell has spent approximately eight hours over the past two weeks liaising with Rabbit Action Groups adjacent to Warrandyte State Park and assessing issues on the ground.

Groups include the Brackenbury, Bradley's Lane/Browns Road and Yarra Brae. Cam is fulfilling a role in the 'Park Care Officer' area of park management, meeting neighbours and discussing management options to ensure successful implementation of integrated control programs across boundaries.

Brush-tailed Phascogale Trapping

During March the Department of Sustainability & Environment and Parks Victoria plan to trap Brush-tailed Phascogales (Tuans) throughout the Warrandyte - Kinglake Priority Management Area (PMA)

Currently this is the only area in the Port Phillip Region (DSE) with a BTP recovery team or Working Group providing critical information about the state of the species in the southern part of its range.

Last year 15 animals were caught in the PMA making Warrandyte - Kinglake a hotspot for the species throughout the state. No other area in the state had this many animals in the 240 trap nights. The results from DNA work being undertaken at Monash University are being finalised at the moment. Certainly it is hoped that the DNA from the local animals varies considerably from animals throughout the rest of the range so the species has greatest chance of survival in the long-term.

Whilst undertaking a rabbit spotlight transect at Mt Lofty on the evening of the 1st March 2003, rangers Cam Beardsell and Craig Lupton spot lit a Brush Tailed Phascogale at Mt Lofty in a Silver Wattle on the river terrace adjacent to the walking track. This is first record for Mt Lofty and reinforces the need to continue corridor enhancement programs, through revegetation and weed control along the Yarra River.

Human Resources

Cam Beardsell has been employed by Parks Victoria to work across Warrandyte State Park

and Yarra Valley Parklands in a natural values capacity for 15 months. Cam will be split 50/50 across the two work centres and be at Warrandyte State Park on Mondays, Tuesdays and every second Thursday. Cam will assume the rabbit co-ordination role across both parks, work with the FOWSP on Thursdays, assist David Van Bockel with weed control and continue monitoring of threatened species in Warrandyte State Park and the Northern Reserves.

Conrad Annal has been appointed Team Leader NVM at Warrandyte State Park and Yarra Valley Parklands and will be working across both parks in a 50/50 arrangement. Conrad will be commencing on 15th March 2004 and brings over 10 years of experience at Bunyip State Park, Lysterfield Lake Park/Churchill National Park and Coolart.

Craig Lupton has been appointed as Acting Ranger in Charge for an additional four months until 2nd July 2004.

Visitor Services

Capital portico works have been completed at the entrance to the Victory and Geraghty's mines in late February 2004. The porticos were experiencing vandalism and the rocks have been mortared into place, thus preventing recurring vandalism.

Fire Protection

All Warrandyte State Park staff, including 6 project fire fighters were deployed to the Mt Torbreck fire in mid February 2004. Staff were away for the maximum of 6 days. The fire burnt out 604 hectares of land in the Rubicon State Forest/Lake Eildon National Park area. The fire was within 20 kilometres of Melbourne Water Catchment and was therefore given a very high priority for resourcing.

The status of Warrandyte State Park and northern reserve burn preparation is as follows:

- Timber Reserve unprepared. Burgan will be chainsawed to the ground to assist with burning of the site.
- Boomers Reserve - Completed
- Caledonia Reserve - Completed
- Harris Gully Rd is 75% complete.
- Proctor Street in St Andrews of 0.5 hectares - Completed

The two burns that have been dropped off for 2003/04 due to resource constraints are Morrison's at Yarra Valley Parklands and Whipstick Gully.

two more books to borrow

By Joan MacMahon

Some of our new members may not know we have a collection of natural history books, some very general, others specifically focussed on Warrandyte. We keep them at the depot where they share shelf space with the rangers' library. Most are available for loan with a two week borrowing period.

Most borrowing happens during the week but if that doesn't suit then phone the depot (9844 2659) and find out what time you can come down on the weekend.

One of the new books is on that perennial interest – weeds. It is "WEEDS friend or foe? An illustrated guide to identifying, taming and using weeds." This book is not so much a 'how to get rid of them' manual, more a coffee-table, feet up and relax while you enjoy the excellent photos, text and attractive layout. While it's an English book, you can rest assured we have most of the 70 or more weeds the author Sally Roth chose to include right here in Warrandyte. For some of them she includes their use as herbal remedies.

Those of us who've fallen in love with the delicate pink flowers of our local 'magician,' the grass trigger plant (*Stylidium* spp.), will love this book. It's called "Triggerplants" by Douglas W. Darnowski. Easily to read, it has only ninety-two

well written and illustrated pages. It's very much focussed on Australia, which has the lion's share of the world's 200 triggerplants. Most are endemic to Australia, while a few grow as far north as P.N.G., India, China and Southern Japan. Western Australia is the heartland, with more than one hundred species within its borders.

The author tells us how the triggering mechanism is thought to work, ponders on its amazing precision, identifies some of the pollinators, tells us how to grow various of the species at home, and wonderfully describes where many of them are found.

In fact he brings to life the tropical north, the wonders of the Blue Mountains, Albany on the south coast of WA, and the alpine meadows of south-eastern Australia.

He makes the important point that "*Understanding what natural sites a species prefers makes its cultivation much, much easier.*" He even provides a list of seed suppliers for those who fancy making a collection.

And the author – where does this wonderfully knowledgeable and enthusiastic scientist hail from? Turns out he works at Washington College in Maryland USA where he is Assistant Professor of Biology! The cover notes tell us "He is a frequent visitor to Australia." Methinks he knows our country better than most Aussies.

As to borrowing the book, you'll need to line up behind me as so far I've only skimmed it for this review. I promise to be quick.

Camping with Koalas

By Pat Coupar

Living in Warrandyte I am very familiar with koalas. I have often seen them high in the branches of



Manna
Gums at
Pound
Bend and
other
places
along the
river. A
couple of
times I

have encountered one crossing the road not far from the rangers depot and nursery. We have even had one stay for a day in a Red Box next to the deck of our Brackenbury Street house. Generally though, to get a good view of one of these 'cute' marsupials,

it requires a good pair of binoculars and results in a stiff neck.

This was not the case a few weeks ago when we were camped at one of our favourite beaches beside the Murray River in the Barmah State Park in northern Victoria.

The Barmah forest contains many magnificent old multi-trunked River Red Gums, but on the sand, near the river's edge where we were camped, the trees are younger and smaller. It was these trees in which the koalas chose to squat and our presence did not bother one bit.

The weekend was hot and, uncharacteristically for us, we spent a very lazy couple of days not moving far from our campsite. Many hours were spent in the company of three koalas. We watched them climb up, climb down, swagger over the sand, munch a few leaves, stretch, scratch and sleep. And from time to time they opened their eyes and watched us pottering around our campsite, swimming, sunbathing, reading, writing, cooking, eating and drinking. Acceptance was mutual.



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Cranberry Heath

(Astroloma humifusum)

Keep an eye out on track edges and dry stony banks for this prickly, low growing member of the Heath family (Epacridaceae). It's narrow bright red tubular flowers appear in autumn, hidden amongst the foliage. The flowers are followed by succulent green berries. Propagation of Cranberry Heath, like most heaths, is difficult. Seeds have a complex dormancy and cuttings are very slow.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Family \$20
Single \$15
Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

Special Membership Offer

Receive a discount if you renew your membership for three years

Single: \$40.00

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