

May 2004

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Rare Fauna Found

By Pat Coupar

Last month, while checking on orchids at One Tree Hill, rangers Cam Beardsell and Craig Lupton came across a dead Feathertail Glider. This was an exciting and important find as this little possum has not officially been recorded in the area before. That they haven't been seen before does not come as a complete surprise as these animals are notoriously difficult to observe in the wild.

At a recent Manningham City Council Environment Seminar given by feathertail fanatic Simon Ward the private life of Feathertail Gliders was revealed. Simon, a senior lecturer in zoology at Melbourne University, has been studying feathertails and other possums for twenty years. He gave a fascinating and enlightening talk illustrated with slides of these undeniably cute creatures.

Feathertail Gliders are very small possums - about the size of a mouse - and like other gliding possums they have an extendable membrane that enables them to glide from tree to tree. In addition, they have an extraordinary flattened tail fringed with stiff hairs giving the appearance of a feather and giving these animals their name.

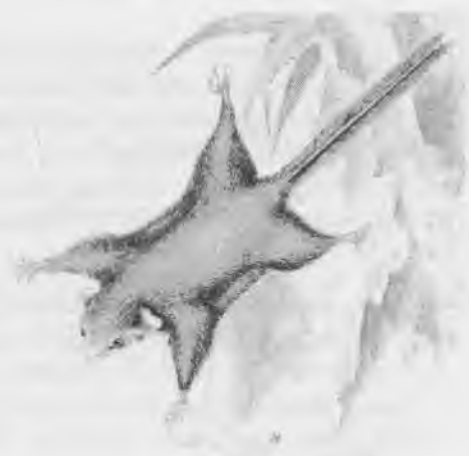
Feathertail Gliders are fairly common in the tall forests of eastern and south-eastern Australia,

but because of their small size and nocturnal habit they are rarely seen. Study of these animals is difficult, not only because they are extremely hard to locate with a spot light, but they will not enter conventional small mammal live traps. However, they will use artificial nest boxes and this has been the most reliable method of capture used by Simon in his study of Feathertail Gliders.

Like most gliders, Feathertails are dependant on forests for food and shelter. They require high-energy food in the form of nectar, pollen and small invertebrates and tree hollows for shelter and nesting.

In his talk Simon readily acknowledged that Feathertail Gliders are usually only encountered when cats bring them inside or when they are discovered dead by people collecting firewood - or in the rangers case checking the flowering of rare orchids in one of Warrandyte's precious northern reserves.

One Tree Hill is indeed a special place, providing vital habitat to a great diversity of flora and fauna amongst which we can now add the elusive Feathertail Glider.



Bush Backyard

Contributions this month from Marie Krause and Pat Coupar

Lyrebird Sightings

By Marie Krause

This is a follow up to my item in the May 2003 newsletter on lyrebird sightings in the Bend of Islands.

On the afternoon of 26th February 2004, while reading the newspaper on our deck, I thought I heard a lyrebird a short distance from our house. I didn't hear its call long enough to be confident to report it. But, the following morning at about 7.00am I listened to its repertoire for about half an hour and walked in the direction of its call. Although I wasn't able to see it, I had no doubts this time and informed my neighbours. Over the next few days our neighbours and other residents in the area reported sightings of a male lyrebird. There were no more reports for a couple of weeks and then about 11.00am on March 22nd I heard it again below our house and decided to try and get a glimpse. I made my way slowly down our pathway and stopped as I got closer. Peering through the branches of Burgan and fallen timber I saw a movement about 15 metres away and saw the bird scratching the soil. After a few minutes it flew onto a low stump and began preening itself and I was able to see its tail clearly and identify it as a male.

Our property is directly across the Yarra River from Mount Lofty and some of the other lyrebird sightings were on properties opposite Wittons Reserve and Clifford Park. Perhaps in the future as Mount Lofty becomes more vegetated we may also hear lyrebirds in Warrandyte State Park.



Poa Power

By Pat Coupar

A week or two ago, just before the rains, I decided to cut back my Poa tussocks. The steep bank below the house is totally covered with a mixture of Tasman Flax-lily (*Dianella tasmanica*), Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) and Common Tussock Grass (*Poa labillardierei*). While the strappy leaves of the flax-lily stayed remarkably green throughout the dry months of summer and autumn, the grasses have mostly turned a parched pale shade of brown.

So I took to them with the pruning saw. I find this implement the easiest and most efficient tool for cutting the grasses. I am quite savage with pruner, shearing all the leaves of as near to the base of the tussock as possible.

Grasses grow from a crown at the base of the plant when the top is chopped off it stimulates the plant to grow more vigorously. Less than twenty-four hours after giving my Poas a No 1 haircut they were starting to grow centimetres of bright green leaves. If you don't believe me, try it for yourself.



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



From Black Flat to Jumping Creek and Back

By Alwynne Buntine

After a busy morning of propagation and sales several of us went with our nursery manager Josh on the second of our new Thursday afternoon walks.

We parked in the car park at the Till's Drive entrance to Black Flat and walked along the river to Jumping Creek Reserve and back again. It was a pleasant autumnal day - not too hot or too cold, and as we set off the sun was warm upon our backs.

Very soon we became aware of the effect the lack of water was having on the plants along this track. The correas, mint bush and pomaderris appeared to be the worst affected, looking quite sad with their wilted leaves, particularly where these plants were growing on the rocky outcrops and ridges.

Josh showed us the last surviving examples



known in the Park of the Dwarf Mat-rush (*Lomandra nana*). We saw one female plant and several male plants growing (unfortunately) amongst the rocks where people walk up and down at a popular swimming hole. On examination it was found the plant had set seed so hopefully we won't be amongst the last group to see it.

On reaching the car park at Jumping Creek we all sat down for a rest and a drink. We hadn't been there long when we noticed an optimistic Kookaburra sitting on a branch above our heads watching to see if we had food as well.

One of the interesting and disappointing features of the walk was the lack of bird life. Only three or four species were heard or seen including Spotted Pardalote, Thornbills, a Whistler (of some sort) and one lone Wood Duck floating along the river. I have walked this track numerous times and always observed many more birds.

On our return journey we left the main track to walk pass the Burgan trial site where, over several years, a section of Burgan has been cleared. We all agreed it would be good to return there in spring after some rain to observe the flora.

Despite the dryness there were still patches of moss in shady gullies hanging on waiting for the rain. And hopefully the rain that is falling as I write this article will make the bush 'smile' again.

Thank you Josh for sharing your knowledge and for an enjoyable walk.

Learning How to Care for Your Patch

Report by Margaret Graham

A new members of FOWSP, Bruce and I went along to this very interesting workshop led by Joan MacMahon, along with about eight others.

Joan promised we would learn to identify at least six grasses, and by the end of a very pleasant afternoon, I think we all could.

Like many others with a beginning knowledge of the "good" plants of our area, I'm OK with shrubs and trees, but the grasses were a bit of a mystery. I'm rehabilitating a gully that runs directly into the Mullum Mullum in Donvale. The gully has had 30 years of horse use and I've got every sort of bad weed and grass you can imagine, along with some very hard packed soil. While the

upper canopy is still intact, the understory and the grasses all have to be replaced.

Now I know my Kangaroo Grass from my Wallaby Grass, and my Tussock Grass from my Plume

Grass, and feel

confident we'll be able to get the gully back to something

like it should be over the next few years.

Since beginning the rehabilitation works, and using plants from the FOWSP nursery, I've had about an 90% success rate over a 4 year period - not bad with minimal water and care! Joan's workshop has given me some extra information and a whole new group of contacts.





Ranger's Report

By Craig Lupton, Acting Ranger In Charge

Natural Values Management

- DSE and Parks Victoria trapped Brush Tailed Phascogale (BTP) throughout the Warrandyte - Kinglake *Priority Management Area* (PMA) on the week starting the 22nd March 2004. The Warrandyte - Kinglake PMA is the only area in the Port Phillip Region (DSE) and therefore provides the BTP recovery team with critical information about the state of the species in the southern part of its range. This year 4 animals were trapped. 3 at Rifle Range Reserve and 1 at Kinglake National Park. Last year 22 animals were caught, including 7 re-traps in the PMA making Warrandyte - Kinglake a hotspot for the species throughout the state. The difference in results can probably be attributed to a March trapping program in 2004 as opposed to a May program in 2003. Breeding commences in May, which coincides with an increase in animal movement and activity.
- Acting Ranger In Charge Craig Lupton conducted a '**Raising Community Awareness of Insect Eating Bats**' session for FOWSP in late March 2004 in the Jumping Creek Area of Warrandyte State Park. A total of 10 participants joined in the activity, and were rewarded with the opportunity to get 'up close and personal' with five different species of insectivorous bats, that ranged in weight from 4g – 15g. A total of 26 bats were trapped over two nights. The species trapped include: Gould's Wattle Bat, Chocolate Wattled Bat, Lesser Long Eared Bat, Little Forest Bat and Large Forest Bat. Traps were set up at Blue Tongue Bend, the Jumping Creek Picnic area and over a maintenance track leading to Stane Brae.
- During a recent inspection of *Pterostylis atrans* (Dark-tip Greenhood) flowering at One Tree Hill, rangers found a dead Feathertail Glider. This is the first official recording of a Feathertail

Glider that Parks Victoria is aware of for One Tree Hill.

Human Resources

- Approval has been given to employ a ranger for a 12-month fixed term to work across Warrandyte State Park and Yarra Valley Parklands, predominantly in a natural values management (NVM) capacity. This will further strengthen the existing highly skilled NVM team that operates across the two park areas. It's envisaged the new ranger will commence employment at Warrandyte State Park by the beginning of June 2004.

Visitor Services

- The Warrandyte State Park Easter Interpretation Program 2004 attracted 65 people who participated in the three available activities – Breakfast with the Birds, a Gold Walk and a night walk.

Fire Protection

The status of Warrandyte State Park and northern reserves burns is as follows:

- Boomers Reserve - Completed
 - Caledonia Reserve - Completed
 - Harris Gully Rd - Completed
 - Proctor Street in St Andrews of 0.5 ha – Completed
 - Timber Reserve - Completed
- The Timber Reserve burn was patchy due to extensive amounts of Burgan. Approximately 50% of the site burnt, with the unburnt areas being predominantly Burgan. Ranger David Van Bockel, with the assistance of the Warrandyte State Park Project Firefighters (PFF) and a Rayco Mini Crawler (mulcher) was able to cut and lay down a significant portion of the Burgan within the 14 hectares Timber Reserve Site. The cut Burgan burnt well as expected, unfortunately time constraints prevented a greater portion of the Burgan being cut.

Matt LeDuc's Memorial

A memorial will be held for Matt LeDuc
at Stane Brae on Sunday July 18th

Lunch will be provided

More details in next newsletter

My Favourite Place

By Ray Clarke



If you drive to Normans Reserve at the end of Bradleys Lane, you can pick up a track following the banks of the river going

downstream. First, you can view the Yarra waters surging into the tunnel, and then, the track holding close to the river, you see many charming reaches of the river.

After about half an hour's walking, allowing for stops to enjoy the bush and the water, you pass through a gate and move down onto a rock bar. Sitting there on a flat rock, listening to the water gurgling between rocks and looking at the beautiful vista downstream, the proximity of the suburbs is forgotten, and worldly cares slide off your shoulders.



Worth Repeating

Winter Gnats

By Ian Endersby

Gnats found in a completely dark gold mine tunnel in Warrandyte were assumed to have reduced or absent eyes and other cavernicolous adaptations. In fact they were found to have large compound eyes and ocelli. Wing venation identified them as from the dipteran family Trichoceridae and other

characters indicated the genus *Nothotrichocera* (subsequently confirmed as *N. terebrella* by Ewa Krzeminska). This family are the winter gnats, apparently feeding as larvae in rotting materials and flying in weak winter sunshine. Little information could be found on their summer habits in either the northern or southern hemisphere but, at least for this species in Victoria, we now know that they aestivate as adults.

Source: *Victorian Entomologist* April 2004

Gone Missing

We have had concerns over the last few months that plants are disappearing from the nursery on a regular basis. This has now been confirmed following the theft of a rare plant that we have been nurturing for several years. The plant had been destined for a specific re-introduction planting to take place this year. In addition, cutting material has been taken from one of our more unusual plants that we had been keeping at the nursery for interest.

We are sure members will be dismayed to learn of the theft of these plants that our hard-working Thursday volunteers have propagated. The Park staff are aware of the problem and are taking extra measures to ensure that no unauthorised person wanders into the nursery out of hours and helps themselves to our precious plants.

Manningham City Council Environment Seminar

'Snakes in the City'

This report has been compiled by Pat Coupar
from notes by Cathy Willis

This talk was given by Heath Butler. Heath is currently working for Zoo's Victoria in the Discovery and Learning section and has recently completed an Honours degree in Conservation Biology on Tiger Snakes in suburban areas around Melbourne.

There are seven species of snakes found in the Melbourne area, five are venomous.

Eastern Brown: This long, slender snake is very fast moving and is found mainly in the northern suburbs. It is the only one of the seven Melbourne species to lay eggs – all others give birth to live young. The Eastern Brown is the second most venomous snake in the world.

Eastern Tiger: This snake is responsible for most serious snake bites, but few deaths – 75% of the bites are 'dry'. The snake can be any shade of brown and doesn't always have stripes. 90% of their diet is frogs, the other 10% birds. The Eastern Tiger is the fourth most venomous snakes of the world.

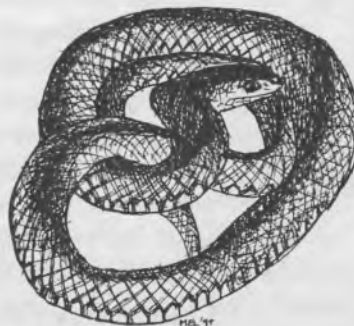
Lowland Copperhead: A shy and inoffensive snake. It is the twelfth most venomous snake in the world (equal with the Cobra).

Red-bellied Black: Another very shy snake. It is more common in eastern and southern suburbs.

Small-eyed Snake: This species is uncommon and very secretive, hunting at night.

White-lipped Snake: This small, cryptically coloured snake is rare and harmless. It is active in cold weather.

Little Whip Snake: This species is similar in appearance to a baby Brown Snake, but is harmless.



Most urban parks have healthy populations of snakes. Contrary to popular belief snakes are barely active once the temperature

goes above 25 Celsius. They are therefore encountered more often in spring and autumn during the day when they are out looking for food or shelter.

Management of snakes in urban areas involves catching and relocating the snakes away from houses into parkland up to five kilometres away. However, this method is not particularly successful as half the snakes end up in another backyard. The only feasible management is to learn to live with them.

First aid for snake bite is to stay calm and still. Apply a pressure bandage and call 000. It is important that the bandage is not removed at any time.

Further Facts:

- Snakes 'smell' through their tongue and not through their nostrils.
- Snakes can change colour on a seasonal basis, being darkest in winter when they need to warm up faster.
- All snakes can climb and all snakes can swim and yes they can bite while swimming.
- The smaller the snake, the shorter its life.
- Most venomous snakes live to about 15 years.
- Scales get bigger not more numerous.

Forthcoming Events

Anderson Ck Planting Morning

Thursday May 20th

Meet at the depot at 9.30am

For a planting morning in the Anderson Ck burn site.

Stane Brae Morning

Thursday May 27th

Meet at the depot 9.15am-9.30am

We will be erecting a small fence in preparation for planting

Morning tea will be provided.

BYO lunch if you would like to stay on for the afternoon walk



By B.G

Helping Hand

Early morning on 29th April Kyen Knight, ex Tasmania now of Eltham Victoria, was helping out at the nursery.

Warrandyte Walk

Thursday afternoon on 22nd April Friends walked from Till's Drive via Black Flat to Sandy Bay and return (see report by Alwynne Buntine in this newsletter).

Platypus Prowl

A photo and mention of our own Cathy Willis appeared in the Maroondah Leader, April 13th 2004. The caption under the photograph read "*Cathy Willis and Geoff Williams (Australian Platypus Conservancy biologist) on the prowl for platypuses in Mullum Mullum Creek during the survey.*"

Nomenclature Nuance

At our recent plant sale a visiting botanist looked at the labelled *Glycine clandestina* var. *sericea* (from Timber Reserve) and suggested tactfully that it was actually a *Glycine microphylla*.

Seen at Stane Brae

Recently Cecilia LeDuc, son Ethan and Briony.

FNC of V

The Field Naturalists Club of Victoria has a fascinating range of activities. For further information ring (03) 9877860. Office and meeting room – 1 Gardenia St, Blackburn, Victoria.

People Power

Between November 2003 and February 2004 at least 35 volunteers were the mainstay helpers at the depot nursery, averaging 13 to 15 people each Thursday. Helpers include: Wendy G, Terry G, Sarah W, Sarah K, Sue Sh., Ray C, Oscar A, Olive W, Marie K, Marion K, Marion Th., Melanie L, Ken C, Joan Mac., Geoff H, Flora A, Elsa A, Dick Th., Cath A, C.H.B., Cathy W, Brian J, Bruce M^CQ., Alwynne B, Alison T, A.M, Amanda T, Andrew H, Alicia K, Jan S, Julie B,

Jarod S-C, Judy G, Irene F and many others have helped since.

Many More

Apropos helpers at the nursery – Barbara Coker, Helen Coker and Lynne Vary participated during March.

Holiday Helpers

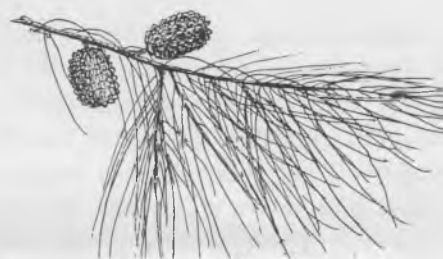
David Trotter, year 11 student at Carey Grammar, turned up and helped during April school holidays. Also Sig Howard, doing first year in Advanced Diploma of Horticulture at Burnley – an ex Steiner student.

Vehicular Visitors

A long white bus pulled in to the depot just after 9.00am on Thursday 15th April. (However did it negotiate the Pound Bend road to the depot?). Fifteen Friends of Braeside and Karkar Oak Park were visiting us. Josh led eleven on a nursery 'grand tour', while four others went bird observing. Swiss roll and drinks were had for morning tea (perhaps we need to improve our potting shed 'drinking' facilities just a little).

Christmas Cuts

One of the visitors from Braeside, Jan (the Gran) Holt, described how they had planted an avenue of she-oaks in their Park, then just before Christmas someone came along and cut the tops of all those trees, which of course spoilt the effect.



Structures and Staff

More information on these matters may be known in the near future.

JGF

A small team of Friends are doing a great job clearing and improving the appearance of the area around the 'Folly' and nursery surrounds. The team have been nicknamed 'Josh's Ground Force'.



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Laughing Kookaburra

Found through eastern Australia from Cape York to Eyre Peninsula in south Australia, the Kookaburra is the largest member of the Kingfisher family.

It feeds on reptiles, including snakes, frogs, crustaceans and large insects captured on the ground by pouncing from a low perch. Its familiar laughing call is often heard at dawn and dusk.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Family \$20

Single \$15

Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

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