

July 2004

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



## Newsletter

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

Welcome to July's newsletter with substitute editor Joan MacMahon. Pat and husband Mike are in Townsville for a couple of months.

I've just returned from three glorious weeks in the Top End, thinking I'd have ten days to prepare this but it turns out I've got to do it a.s.a.p., to give maximum notice to folk wanting to come to Matt LeDuc's memorial gathering. I'd like to tell you I've been playing with computers for about a decade but I'm still at the 'preliminary stage' when it comes to the finer points of word processing so here goes.....

### Memorial for Matt

12 o'clock, Sunday, 18th July

at Stane Brae (access via Jumping Creek)

Come and celebrate the life of Matt Le Duc, former Head Ranger at Warrandyte, and a very good friend to FOWSP.

Many people were unable to attend Matt's funeral last year. This is a chance to get together with his family, his colleagues and friends to remember him and his positive influence on our group and the Park.

A memorial seat (made of recycled timbers by Ken Macmahon) will be unveiled. It overlooks the river, at one of Matt's favourite spots.

It's close to the site of the park home he and his family lived in during their time here in Warrandyte.

We'll provide a BBQ lunch and drinks – please bring your own plate/cup/cutlery etc. The gate to Stane Brae from Sandy Bay at Jumping Creek Reserve (Melways 24 A11) will be open to allow you to drive in.

Please RSVP for catering purposes to Cathy Willis 98409122 (business hours)

Our next Thursday planting is nearly upon us – details on page 3.

### *Future Events*

According to the Middle Yarra Timelines Calendar, June and July are the time of Deep or Late Winter, so not long to wait until Early Spring (August and September) when the wildflowers and the weather will be urging us outside.

I'm planning to organise several wildflower rambles in September and October, to The Common, Jumping Creek, 4<sup>th</sup> Hill – any other suggestions?

Watch this space for the dates.

Something a bit different this month in the weed department – it concerns that really shiny leafed shrub you may know as Mirror Bush (*Coprosma repens*) – it doesn't cause too much trouble in our area but it is a real problem along some parts of the coast.

Edith Irving of Brackenbury Street writes;

“At last – a weed that is actually useful! For years I have been cutting it back, and trying to grub it out. But now after reading the enclosed cutting, I can not only let it grow, but somebody from the Friends of the Zoos will come and prune it and take it away for me.

The editors of Zoo news have told me they would be more than happy to have you re-print their article, in case there are other friends in Warrandyte who have it growing and would be willing to help.

They have asked me to add that it must be at least seven metres from a road, as car emissions pollute the surface of the leaves.”

If you've got one and you'd like to help and it's less than seven metres from a road I'm sure you could argue that the air in Warrandyte is a lot cleaner than your average Melbourne air!

Did you know we have our own 'true blue' coprosma? It's a tough shrub, a real survivor, by name Prickly Currant Bush (*Coprosma quadricifida*). Locally you'll find it by the river and in sheltered gullies and other shaded locations. It lives up to it's common name as the side branches have spiny ends and between January and March it's hung with soft red fruits. I've seen it reassert itself in a south-facing gully off Osborne Rd after decades worth of ivy was removed. A real champion!

It's a plant you'll also find in Tasmania and the moister parts of Victoria and New South Wales. It's weedy cousin's natural range is somewhere in New Zealand where it's common name is Taupata.



Prickly Currant Bush  
(lifesize)

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## COPROSMA – CAN YOU HELP?

by Sue Arnott

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**M**ost of the herbivorous animals at Melbourne Zoo are fed freshly cut vegetation as part of their daily food. This 'browse' provides important minerals, vitamins and variety to the animal's diet. Thousands of trees have been planted at Werribee Zoo specifically to provide the special eucalyptus leaves to feed the Koalas and other herbivores, but there is another delicacy that the Zoo is seeking from FOTZ members.

The plant is called *Coprosma* and is also known as Shiny Leaf or Mirror Bush. It is widely distributed around Melbourne gardens. All of the browse-eating animals eat *Coprosma* and for a number of them it is their preferred choice. Quokkas, land tortoises, tree-kangaroos, iguanas and the tapir show a particular preference for *Coprosma* browse.

If you recognize the photograph of *Coprosma* because it is growing on your property and you are willing to have FOTZ volunteers come and prune the bush twice a year to provide food for the animals, we would love to hear from you. We do not strip the bush completely but try to prune it as you would do yourself, leaving it looking neat and well shaped. Pruning takes about ten minutes. To register, please call the FOTZ Office on 9285 9351 and leave your name, address and phone number. One of the *Coprosma* team will then contact you to make more detailed arrangements.

Our objective is to have sufficient addresses to be able to deliver a boot load of *Coprosma* branches each day of the year. The typical *Coprosma* bush provides two or three loads twice a year so we need over one hundred 'volunteer' bushes to be able to maintain supply. **ZN**



## More Contributions Please

Please keep your sightings and observations for **"Bush Backyard"** coming in. Remember they don't have to be confined to the local area, we like to hear about flora and fauna from around the State, the Country and even the Globe!

Also members might like to comment on any interesting books they have read. We would also like to hear about your favourite places for the **"My favourite locations"** segments on road/beach/river or whatever or wherever.

And don't forget **"My Worst Weed"** is ongoing, even if you have contributed before you are allowed another worst weed! A new segment last year was **"Food for Thought"** which covers just about anything and everything!

Contributions do not have to be long or perfectly written, drop us a line or two. Send by post to PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113 or via email at [ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au](mailto:ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au).

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**PLANTS IN THE GROUND:** Our next planting day is not far away – Thursday July 15<sup>th</sup>. Meet at the depot at 9.30 or go straight to the site, the end of Bradleys Lane, by 10 a.m. The Fern Site is looking better and better, now that so many weeds have been eliminated. Come and see the forest of Muttonwoods and our previous plantings. We'll be putting in forty or so ferns and some Tassel Sedge.

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Here's our latest WILDLIFE WATCH by Julie Prior of Wonga Park

The Koalas have been having a hard time in the past 2 weeks; we have lost another 3.

The first an adult, female, came from Grand View Road, Warrandyte. She went looking for help by knocking on the front door of the house, when I arrived she was sitting in a laundry basket.

Unfortunately she was found near death and was put down. An autopsy showed renal failure. Her kidneys, liver and spleen were all affected; she was not a well Koala.

The other two were a male and a female, both were hit by cars on Warrandyte / Templestowe Road. One near Oaklands Dr the other was near Anderson Creek Road.

One made it to the Vet and needed to be put down, the other had severe injuries and we gave her every chance but she was found dead in her cage 2 days later.

The Koalas have started moving again, for some reason they have started breeding out of season.

You may hear them calling at night. Breeding season is usually October to late March.

Bob, one of the male Koalas at Healesville Sanctuary has been active and we should be able to see a mother and joey up there early next year.

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## 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.), The Old Bakery Bookshop, the florists, the Blue Bicycle café on the Webb St corner and The Soil Shop Nursery.

New outlets could be any or all of the following; Beasleys Nursery, Warranglen 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 etc.

I'd like to thank Ian from Goldfields Cellars for his enthusiastic support of our publication. Unfortunately the shop has closed so let's hope the next people are just as helpful.

The Blue Bicycle is proving a great outlet – the new folks there are extra friendly and managed to sell several dozen in a few weeks.

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

## Who's Who?

**Michelle Hanslow is a relatively recent addition to our committee. She is very enthusiastic, a great article writer and keen to be involved in projects so I asked her to provide us with some of her background. I'm pleased to say she came up with her 'cv' and the next two articles at wonderfully short notice.**

There are a lot of FOWSP members with not only an interest in the environment, but also professional experience and education in matters environmental. I have been expanding my own repertoire, with qualifications in horticulture (Burnley College) and natural resource management (Swinburne TAFE) recently completed.

I have a particular interest in fragmented landscapes and the abilities of various plant and animal species to be able to tolerate or adapt to smaller patch sizes and human interference. Areas such as Warrandyte and the Green Wedge are very important in this respect, as they contain some of the larger patches in urban Melbourne, with a wealth of biodiversity still present. The latest Manningham Council presentation by Dr John White (Lecturer in Wildlife Ecology at Deakin University) looked at the effect of patch sizes on birds around urban Melbourne. Initial results indicate (and not surprisingly) that the larger the patch, the greater the diversity and abundance of native birds, whilst smaller patches or those featuring exotic trees had a greater incidence of introduced and pest bird species. Stay tuned to this newsletter for a full description of this fascinating talk.

As well as being an active FOWSP committee member, I have worked as a volunteer with Parks Victoria at the Yarra Valley Parklands (Westerfolds), Warrandyte State Park, Dandenong Ranges Gardens (Alfred Nicholas, Tindale and Pirianda Gardens) and am starting at the Dandenong Ranges National Park in mid-July. My achievements included: a series of posters for the Bolin Bolin Billabong in Bulleen, writing the text for the Eltham Copper Butterfly display board at the Pauline Toner Reserve in Eltham, mapping roadways in Pound Bend Reserve and at Whipstick Gully with a GPS unit, and development of a management plan for the Eltham Copper Butterfly (which was presented to the ECB Recovery Team in April 2004).

Last year I went to Nhill for the Project Hindmarsh Landcare revegetation weekend. This

was an amazing insight into large-scale revegetation programs – quite different to a lot of the FOWSP plantings. There were over 300 people there!

I have also volunteered at the Arthur Rylah Institute (DSE) in Heidelberg, including a period radio-tracking the Fruit Bats in the Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. I have done plenty of other fauna surveying using Elliot traps, cages, harp traps, pitfall lines, and cannon netting. Mostly this was whilst I was a member of the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, but also through Swinburne, the Bird Observers Club and with Malcolm Legg Ecological and Environmental Services, where I spent a week surveying fauna at Greens Bush in the Mornington Peninsula Biosphere.

I urge anyone with the time and the interest to get involved in as many environmental projects as possible – it not only provides a sense of satisfaction but gives you a far greater understanding of environmental processes. I am keen to put my skills and education to use in as many ways as possible, and I would be keen to hear from other FOWSP members who would also like to make use of their own expertise in the protection of Warrandyte State Park.

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### Wildlife in the Strangest Places

By Michelle Hanslow

I am sad to say that I no longer live in Manningham, and have retreated over the other side of the Mullum Mullum Creek to Heathmont. On busy Canterbury Road (near Wantirna Road), in a block of four units with backyards devoid of tree life (except for a solitary *Pinus radiata*!)

I was not expecting to come into much contact with wildlife. However, I suppose one of the joys of having few trees around is that any wildlife that is struggling to coexist with us must reside in the few remaining trees or in our roof spaces. Whilst this is a little sad, it also increases our opportunities to spot the little critters!

Along the edge of my long drive way there are two trees – a plum and an apricot (or related). One night, a few months back, I arrived home quite late and when I got out of my car I heard a strange whoosh-whoosh noise and saw a fruit bat (or Grey-headed Flying Fox) flapping out of one of these trees. I realised then that the fruit on both of these trees was probably at an appetising stage for fruit eaters (except myself – still too bitter!).

I got my torch out and had a closer look. The bat periodically came back and flew away again when he realised I was there, but what I also

spotted was a Ringtail Possum *and* a Common Brushtail Possum both feeding in the same tree.

I have seen the Ringtails a few other times, including wandering along my back fence, and feeding in the neighbour's Grevillea Robusta.

No indigenous tree species here, but no lack of wildlife. Isn't life strange?

### Want to See More?

For those of you who like spying on cute and furries (and even the slightly less cute) I recommend that you check out the internet site (<http://www.gould.edu.au/wildlifecams/>) "Wildlife Cam - a Gould Initiative".

There are four cameras, three in nest boxes, that you can spy with - the Sugar Glider Cam is my favourite. At 6pm tonight (1<sup>st</sup> July) I watched one scampering around its box and then leave to feed. The Kookaburra Cam has been empty until last week, when I watched a sleeping possum for hours during the daylight period. It was so big and close that I could see it breathing! It was almost too close, which made it a bit blurry and just a mass of fur. The Gould's Wattled Bat Cam is another goodie - these little beauties are usually easy to see but may not do too much. Finally, the Red Bullant Cam is there, but appears to be an on-ground view of a nest - I am yet to see anything there yet.

The cameras were developed by Gary Connor of Nocturnal Solutions and are based at the Melbourne Wildlife Sanctuary in Bundoora. The project is funded by the Telematics Course Development Fund Trust and is a joint project of the Gould League and La Trobe University. Happy viewing!

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### Plants on Display

Next time you're down at our nursery have a look at our mini-arboretum. It's to the left of the pile of discarded potting mix and was recently planted by some of the Thursday mob. It'll be a great place for people to learn which plant is what. At the moment it mainly features some of our smaller wattles, one of which is heavy with buds (Myrtle Wattle) while the Juniper Wattle has started to open its large cream flower balls.

We are looking for someone who'd like to look after it - occasional planting, pruning, labelling etc. Josh, Pat, Joan will be happy to advise.

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### Cootamundra Country

Have you noticed the lovely bright gold blossoms of Warrandyte's ever growing masses of this cheeky invader? It lines many of our streets and 'adorns' many of our nature reserves. It's definitely the commonest wattle in my street.

Despite both local councils having listed it in their respective weed publications for years - how many people ever see them? - they are failing to educate the wider community about the threat it poses to local ecological processes and therefore wildlife.

Each flowering season is allowed to pass without public mention of the need to remove them.

No wonder so many people have them growing in their gardens!

You'd think it would be logical for both Manningham and Nillumbik to provide some money to allow for regular articles in our local press. Is that so difficult?

As it is, with each passing year the number of these woody weeds increases (? exponentially).

Is it a case of the left hand not knowing what the right is up to? There is a serious lack of communication between the department that created the weed brochures and the department looking after our nature strips.

I'd like to suggest it would be worthwhile if each of us wrote to our council c.e.o. and asked **when** they are going to seriously address this growing problem.

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### Poking About

Hadn't been anywhere locally for a while other than my own patch so Sunday morning of July the 4th saw me driving up to Tunnel Street for a quiet ramble on 4<sup>th</sup> Hill.

The bush looked pretty quiet but even before I passed the entrance barrier I found a correa in flower, hung with pale green bells. Next to it was a healthy small-leaf clematis, draped over several other plants. Its four-petaled flowers are the same colour as the correa's.

Once through I headed for the higher, drier parts. I soon found three wattles in various stages of preparation for flowering. The spreading wattle had already opened a flower or two, while the golden and the prickly moses were laden with buds. Later I found one isolated common heath with a delightful display of small white bells. Then as I came close to the Betton Crescent exit a "wall" of woody weeds appeared - escapes from the houses in nearby Brett Street; lots of cootamundras, sallow wattles, pines.

I reckon most could be easily dealt with by handsaw and it would be a wonderful project to clean them all out. (Oh for a ranger with time enough to educate those park neighbours.) *Any of our members interested in running this project?*



## Expanding Our Role As Volunteers in Warrandyte State Park By Michelle Hanslow

In April this year, I attended a workshop run by Conservation Volunteers (formerly the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers) called "Communities and Volunteers in Natural Resource Management". I went both as a representative of FOWSP and to improve my abilities in working with volunteer groups.

About 18 people participated in this one day program, with representation from other groups including Greenlink (in Box Hill), the Merri Creek Management Committee, Waterwatch, plus environmental employees from the Hume and Frankston City Councils.

Risk management was probably the biggest topic that was covered, as course participants rated this as their greatest concern when managing volunteers. Some of the risks to environmental volunteers include slipping, sunburn, getting lost in the bush, injuries from tools (mattocks etc), falling tree limbs, snakebites and soil-borne diseases. It is generally assumed that volunteers will use some common sense (Section 25, OH&S Act 1985), however, as managers of volunteers, the committee of FOWSP have a responsibility to have assessed these risks and acted accordingly, so that all volunteers are as safe as possible (Section 21 OH&S Act 1985).

I gained a lot from this program, with much to be learned from the experiences of other volunteer Friends groups. I rate the Friends of Warrandyte State Park very highly. There is a great deal of expertise and enthusiasm among the members, and good working relationships with the park rangers adding to the quality of this large volunteer group. I came away from the day inspired that we can be even more than we are now, hoping that I can make a difference to the park.

I will be writing more about my thoughts on FOWSP in editions to come. As a volunteer, I am passionate about Warrandyte State Park and I believe that FOWSP has much to offer. We have a top class nursery, thanks to Nursery Manager, Josh Revell, with regular successful planting days. I also believe that there is more we can achieve! With so many members, we have a broad range of skills and knowledge that can be shared. I know that there are many professionals and students of environmental studies (such as myself) with abilities that can be used to address some of the concerns that FOWSP members have about the environment – in addition to nursery and planting activities we could also increase education of park neighbours in relation to

weed control to protect our remnant vegetation; carry out water testing of our local creeks (with results passed on to Waterwatch); increase publicity of FOWSP through local papers and working bees; and enhance of our wonderful revegetation projects with preliminary and follow-up weed control. Stay tuned for more!

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Some wise words I found a few years ago (author unknown):

"In the end we will only conserve what we love, we will love only what we understand and we will only understand what we are taught."

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### Who Has An Interest In Warrandyte River Reserve?

This is the council managed land stretching from Anderson's Creek to Till's Drive. For many people this is the heart of Warrandyte and it's extremely popular.

The draft management plan (released in June) covers heaps of issues including dogs, horses, risks, bicycles, significant sites, furniture, signage, plants and native animals.

Submissions are invited from the community with the closing date being July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

FOWSP have been sent a copy. If you'd like to use it phone Joan on 9844 3213. You might want your own, in which case phone Nancy Stokes, open space planner on 9840 9138.

So, if you've ever thought the river area could be changed for the better now is definitely a very good time to do something about it.

Have your say!

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Any room for wombats  
in the river reserve?



By B.G

### **CREEK CARE**

Dale Morgan, Dina Dare and Bernie Herlihy came to the Depot in May to inform us of the activities of the Mullum Mullum Creek Bushcare Group. Their group works on the section between Oban Road and the "new" Bypass. They are having working bees on July 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Contact Dale, phone 98701060.

### **REGARDING ROSEANNE**

Roseanne Pirotta has been helping at the nursery. She and her husband and children will be nurturing their local plants around their new home.

### **WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE (PEOPLE AND PLANTS WASTE WATER!)**

Scientists are exploring the potential of photobioreactors to exploit the photosynthetic abilities of cyanobacteria and microscopic algae. "Plants tend to be incredibly wasteful of water because moisture escapes from the leaves as CO<sub>2</sub> is absorbed through the leaf pores. This is especially true for some crops; it takes thousands of litres of water to produce one Kilogram of cotton. Photosynthesis in plants is only 5% efficient in solar energy conversion. Researchers can build in more efficiency." (ECOS, page 10, Oct/Dec 2003)

### **BRIAN'S BASS**

Brian James, one of our regular helpers, appeared as a cast member (and singer) in the "Desert Song" musical at Warrandyte High School in May.

### **"RAGING" WITH RAY**

On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> of May, over three dozen people gathered at the Depot to help Ray Clarke celebrate his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Thirteen years or so ago Ray started helping as a volunteer at the depot and is still going strong.

Ray let his hair down and told two stories about nonagenarians. One alluding to the lowering of certain drives and the other about two 1<sup>st</sup> World War veterans.

He then cut the cake (made by Cathy W) and all present enjoyed a barbeque lunch.

### **MIGHTY MITES**

Something was devastating the orchids in the nursery last month. Rapid research by Dick Thomson indicated it was mites (which have 8 legs, like spiders). The response to the terrorist mites was rapid and hopefully successful.

### **WATER WISE**

A major project piping open channels in the Wimmera Mallee is proceeding. It is estimated that the water sourced from the Grampians loses 80% by evaporation or seepage. ("KUNZEA" June 2004)

### **CARPING ON CARP**

"Introduced fish species in the Murray River now make up 98% of the fish biomass." Dr. Simon Treadwell

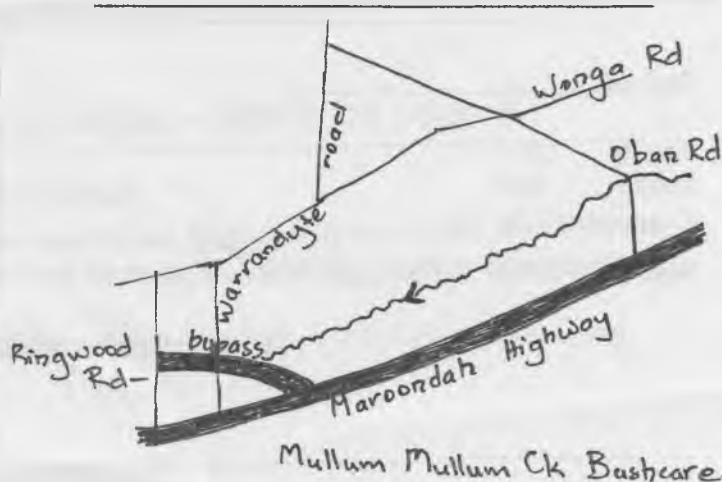
### **RAPID RESPONSE TO ALWYNNE BUNTINE'S "WHEN I TURN 80..."**

This time last year "I Spy" and spouse were sightseeing in Alice Springs, N.T. Trephina Gorge, Honeymoon gap, Standly Chasm, Olive Pink Botanical Gardens, Araluan Centre, the Desert park, Todd Market, Todd Tavern, NAIDOC Parade, N.T. fireworks, bridal gown parade, the Finke Desert Race, the Agricultural Show, Corroboree Rock, Beanie show, Country Music Club, Hermansburg etc.

However, since our return we have endured a lumber laminectomy, an acrimoplasty and rotator Ca ??? repair. For at least 12 months and possibly permanently we can only drive 20 minutes, can't carry more than 1 kilogram, can't travel any distance by car, plane, train etc.

So, why "waity" till eighty?

In the words of an old English folk song. "He who would not when they may, may not when they would."





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### Swamp Pennywort (*Centella cordifolia*)

This light green creeping herb is found in damp gullies and along river flats. It has umbels of small deep pink flowers in spring and summer.

Swamp Pennywort makes a good ground cover around ponds and in boggy areas and it will grow in shallow water.

Its leaves are used as a medicinal herb for a number of ailments

## 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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