

December 2004

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

Friends of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) Inc. P O Box 220 Warrandyte 3113
ABN 94170156655/ACN A0024890C

Future Directions?

By Pat Coupar

If membership numbers are anything to go by, then FOWSP is in a very healthy state indeed. Numbers have been increasing, particularly in the last couple of years, and the current membership is around 310

However concerns have been raised at the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) that the running of our organisation is falling on the shoulders of too few. The resignation of one committee member mid-year and another two at the AGM - and no recruits - leaves the FOWSP committee of management in a depleted state. There are now four vacancies on the committee with no new contenders on the horizon.

The lack of membership involvement was reflected in the poor turn out (only four) of non-committee members at the AGM. As advertised, all members were invited to attend the AGM. The meeting has always been seen as a forum for discussion giving all members the opportunity to have some input into the running of the group, both to air concerns and provide suggestions for future directions.

We claim in our brochure that education is high on the FOWSP agenda and we pride ourselves on the range of activities we provide. These include flora and fauna walks, talks, excursions, working bees and social events. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain this diverse program when committee numbers are dwindling.

If we had a full complement of 12 committee members the load could be shared so that, for

example, it may mean one member is only required to organise one activity per year. This would enable us to offer a regular once a month FOWSP activity day.

In addition, the collection, labeling and posting of our monthly newsletter is another task shared around by committee members. This would also be made easier with more members on the committee.

We all lead busy lives, not least our nursery manager who not only oversees the Thursday propagation mornings and sales, plus the monthly Sunday sales, but also spends many hours attending to orders, seed collection, sowing, ordering materials and organising nursery renovations. During the year he has had to contend with vandalism by rebel cockies (around 2000 plants destroyed), attacks on the plants by rats, ducks and millipedes. Other demands on his time are leading walks once a month and giving propagation workshops.

There is no doubt that our increased membership is due, in part, to the success of the nursery and to the dedication of the nursery manager. The success of our group is also due to our wonderful volunteers who run the information trailer at the monthly Warrandyte market.

Perhaps next year with some new faces and some new ideas our group could be even better. Think about it. Please.

Bush Backyard

Contributions this month from Pat Coupar

Making a Meal of it

By Pat Coupar

At this time of year snowy-white blobs appear along the branches and stems of my Burgan – yes (despite my anti-burgan assertions) I do have Burgan in my garden!

The blobs consist of fine, curled, sticky strands of a powdery, cottony substance - slightly sticky to touch, not unlike white candy floss. When the coating is gently pulled apart a small soft-bodied insect is revealed.

The insect belongs to a superfamily of insects called Coccoidea that includes scale insects, gall makers and mealy bugs. They are soft-bodied insects that live, mainly in their juvenile stages, within or under a shelter. This adaptation not only protects the insect from predation, but also prevents desiccation. Females are sac-like and sedentary – only males can fly.

Small infestations of these insects go through their life cycle and cause no know harm to the plant. By autumn they will all be gone.



More Snippets Please

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

Parks Victoria Fire Rehabilitation Program in the Alpine District

Report by Ben Gotlib

This information night was held at the 'Folly' on Friday 22nd October. The guest speaker was Libby Jude from the Maribynong Valley Parklands.

Concern has been expressed at the amount of money spent on the rehabilitation of the high country and the effect it has had on the funding for other Parks in Victoria, following the Alpine fires of 2003.

Across south-eastern Australia the rainfall deficit during 2002/03 ranged from between 40% and 100% below average and there was markedly low humidity. On 8th January 2002 storms ignited 164 fires – 89 in Victoria, 72 in NSW and 3 in the ACT. One life was lost, 41 houses and 200 other structures destroyed, as well as 75,000 hectares of farmland, 3,000 kms of fencing and 9,100 head of stock, affecting 43 grazing licenses. Over 15,500 firefighters from various agencies were involved over 60 days. The government response was to allocate \$70,000,000 for community and public land recovery.

Following fire, soils will not absorb water for three to four months, consequently large volumes of soil can be washed away. To stabilise the soil windrows of fallen dead trees were laid at right

angles to tracks. Bulldozers were used to clear drains and ground crews created silt traps.

In a sensitive alpine ecosystem of extreme climate and poor soil disturbance should be minimal and was restricted mainly to the protection of alpine resort assets. 80% of disturbance lines were stabilised by late autumn followed by an audit in 2004 to ensure standards were still in place.

Threatened species such as the Mountain Pygmy Possum were studied in relation to increased exposure to predators. There was also a risk of massive germination of invasive plants such as English Broom. Increased control was established to achieve maximum eradication while the seed bank was vulnerable. Replacement of Alpine Ash was by post-fire seeding.

Other interesting facts:

- Alpine grazing has been discontinued for two years.
- Indigenous culture sites of high value have been exposed by the fire.
- Of the 1% area surveyed 430 sites were registered.
- 48 huts of historic value were destroyed – one hut costs \$200,000 to replace.
- A helicopter costs \$800/\$900 per hour; Mt Buffalo NP was closed for 40 days.
- New 'environmentally sensitive' toilets cost \$100,000.

Wetland Ecology and Management

**Dr Suzie Moore, Director of ECOS
Environmental Consulting.**

Report by Michelle Hanslow

Dr Moore has been studying and working in the field of aquatic ecology and wetland management for 15 years. ECOS are involved in projects relating to natural resource management, sustainable development, public health and ecological risk assessment (in catchments).

Dr Moore defined wetlands as land that is wet, containing flora that is adapted to wet conditions and fauna that utilise aquatic resources. The RAMSAR Conference in Iran described wetlands in slightly different terms and listed certain wetlands as internationally significant. Their rating of importance was often based on the bird diversity found at the wetlands. Australia boasts quite a few RAMSAR sites, including Lake Corangamite in western Victoria.

The flora found in wetlands changes depending on the depth of the water (as well as other variables such as how long the area is inundated). These wetlands may be classified as River Red Gum Woodland (which are wet every 2 years), River Red Gum Sedge Woodland, Swamp Paperbark and Common Reed Closed Grassland or Freshwater Marsh, Sedgeland and Mudflat

There is a high level of biodiversity in wetland fauna, with not only vertebrate species, including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, but also a whole world of invertebrate species, with most orders of freshwater species present.

Different wetland types attract different bird species. For instance, permanent open water (deep lakes and so forth) may feature White-bellied Sea Eagles and Pied Cormorants. Shallow water and mudflats on the other hand are more likely to attract Sandpipers, Stints, Terns, Eastern Curlews, Royal Spoonbills and so forth.

Water regimes in temperate zones such as Australia are characterised by the extent and duration (both related to the volume and frequency), frequency (annual or 10 year cycles), and timing (summer flood or winter?). These issues become critical when managing wetlands. Questions need to be asked. How much water is needed in this river/lake etc to sustain the flora and fauna? Are period floods needed to control aggressive plant species or to provide breeding

opportunities for fish? The questions will be determined by the type of waterway concerned.

Altered water regimes (through extraction, drainage, storage etc.), nutrients, contaminants, salinity, sedimentation, erosion, dredging, infilling, pest flora and fauna, inappropriate grazing, cultivation, altered fire regimes, resource utilisation (e.g. peat extraction and logging), loss of connection, inappropriate re-creation... It seems the list of things that modern day "civilisation" can and will do to waterways just goes on and on!

Less frequent inundation leads to reduced recruitment of flora and decreased breeding opportunities for birds. The duration and extent of inundation is also important, particularly for fledging, whilst plant communities can change with altered flooding regimes also. For example, permanent flooding of ephemeral wetlands (often seen in new housing estates, with these vital wetlands transformed into small lakes) leads to loss of plant communities, an increase in fish-eating birds and a decrease in birds that eat wetland terrestrial invertebrates. Similarly, the Common Reed, which becomes invasive in constant shallow levels of water are controlled by periodic deep flooding waters.

Water management is complicated. It requires study of the hydrological characteristics (using existing hydrological records, rainfall and evaporation data) and the ecology of each site. Parks Victoria, DSE, Catchment Management Authorities, Environment Australia, corporations such as golf courses and water authorities, as well as individuals and community groups all are involved in water management. Contact your local authority if you have any questions about water on your property or in your local catchment area.



Wildlife Rescue

By Julie Pryor



So far only two Joeys have been sighted for our Koala count. One was at Westerfolds Park, the other was in Kerry Road Warranwood. Mum was last sighted in Merrill Close Warranwood, they have not moved but there is a big Koala close by, hopefully it's a male.

The Koala Count has been fairly low this year, the total so far is nine including the two joeys, but 1 have not received any information from the councils as yet. I will have full results in the next newsletter.

Thanks to Cam, Conrad and all the people who came to help with the count in the Park. On the day we found 17 Koalas and 2 were found -at Bend of Isles Wonga Park.

With the warmer weather upon us please remember to leave a dish of water available for any of our wildlife that may be passing your way. A dish on the ground is great, don't make it too deep so little animals can get to it. I know of an Echidna last summer that decided to have a rest in the bowl of water. Another bowl of water up on a shed roof is good for any animals in the trees so they don't have to come to ground and run the risk of dog or cat attack-.



Summary of the AGM

The AGM was held on Sunday 28th November at the Folly. After a general introduction by chairman Geoff Speedy, Karen Reynolds gave an overview of the year's activities and achievements that included: a massive clearance of plants over the festival weekend, several planting days, workshops, fire rehabilitation information night, Thursday pm walks, nursery renovations and our successful grant application for a new computer and digital camera.

Ray Clarke gave the treasurer's report. Our overall financial state is healthy and the committee is currently developing a plan for the next 2-3 years to make the best use of the funds.

WSP ranger Jodie Godfrey presented the rangers report. Achievements for the year included: education of rabbit action groups on control methods; entrance works to Victory and Geraghty's mines; brush-tailed phascogale trapping; five fuel reduction burns; Easter interps program; Pittosporum control at One Tree Hill; biolink planting at Stane Brae; resurfacing Pound Bend and Gold Memorial car parks; new bbq installed at Jumping Creek and pest plant and animal control in the State Park and northern reserves.

FOWSP were given a big thankyou for their continued support.

Josh Revell reported that the nursery was doing well despite the loss of Parks Vic funds.

Nursery attendance had dropped slightly; 51,000 plants are scheduled for propagation and sale next year; Sunday afternoon openings have shown to be very successful, however there are difficulties encountered with only Josh in attendance with 20 – 25 customers waiting for his assistance. Josh gave a big thank you also to the committee and the volunteers who come down to work in the nursery on Thursdays.

Following the reports there was a general discussion about whether FOWSP should establish a closer working relationship with the Warrandyte Community Association. As FOWSP is the community group supporting the Park, it was felt that it was important that our views on Park matters should be known and understood by WCA. It was agreed that the most appropriate means of addressing this issue was for FOWSP to have a representative at WCA committee meetings thereby providing an opportunity for FOWSP input into Park related matters.

The following issues were raised to the committee for consideration in 2005:

- Poor attendance to AGM – 300+ membership and only 4 non-committee members attending the AGM.
- Community education – some of our nursery customers are requesting further education on fauna and flora of the area.

The meeting was followed by a social barbeque.

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.



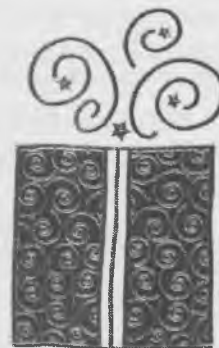
Important Notice

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.

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.

We wish all our members a
merry Christmas and a
happy New Year



FOWSP Committee 2004

Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor	<u>Wildlife Rescue</u>	
Dick Thomson	9850 9867	Treasurer	Julie Pryor	9722 1117
Peter Curry	9844 0958	Secretary	<u>Market</u>	
Geoff Speedy	9437 0894		Marie Krause	9712 0498
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary	<u>Assistant Treasurer</u>	
Mike Coupar	9844 1650		Ray Clarke	9841 8507
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797	Minutes Secretary	<u>Nursery Manager</u>	
			0408317327	
Michelle Hanslow	0402251577		<u>Park Office</u>	9844 2659

**There will be NO January newsletter. Deadline
for February newsletter is January 16th**

Subscriptions for 2005 are due 01/01/05

To renew your membership to FOWSP for next year please fill in the form below and send it to the secretary FOWSP, PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

Membership entitles you to one free plant a month from the market stall, 11 newsletters per year and the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities including slide nights and excursions throughout the year.

Thank you for your support.



Name

Address

..... Tel. no.

Family/Joint/Individual \$20

Concession \$10

From Around the Country

Freedom Walking the Milford Track

By Peggy Safstrom

New Zealand. Lake Te Anau. A small jetty. A boat - 100 years old, yet clean as a whistle in this algae free water - a two hour relaxing ride to the head of the lake before starting off. I keep looking at my big, new, full backpack. It is challenging me somewhat. Will I cope? Too late now, we're here. Up and on with it. Lean forward. Wow, not TOO far forward!

Huge Beech trees - moss and lichen draped fairy trees. Forget the weight of the pack. Enjoy the deep multi-colored leaves strewn thickly on the track. Watch them - tiny rainbow boats - racing down the river. Only a two-hour walk to Clinton Forks Hut. There's plenty of daylight left. Take three. Just enjoy!

Oh! What a SMALL hut. No washing facilities. Is that bar of soap by the tank tap the BATHROOM? A smelly, long-drop toilet. Sand flies. Three tiered bunks. TOO MANY PEOPLE! A bunk found for Lawrie up over there. One over here, RIGHT ON TOP, for me. That's what we get for taking three hours.

Go on. Climb up. What! No ladder? But there's a fellow curled up asleep both on the first and second bunks. I have to leave my pack down here and haul myself up. Go on, just do it.

I did it. Now, can I see Lawrie from here? NO. Oh dear, I must try to relax. Get some sleep. Tomorrow is a long day's hike. But what if I need to get up in the night? I mustn't. I just mustn't. Oh let's get up (or down) at first light, and get away on our own.

Ah. A warm, sunny morning. First up. Have a quick wash. Get going. Into our packs go the heavy boots. On with the sneakers. Better more weight on the back than lifting leaden weighted feet up steep slopes.

Oh! What a feeling! Ambling along with light feet. Beauty all around. Stop for a photo. And another. How many films did we bring? Never seen such beauty. Just look at those rugged, snow-capped, jagged mountains way over there. Now, just look at that rock pool. Isn't that just superb! Let's stop. Let's soak our feet. Let them sunbake while our sweaty socks air. How we love this 'freedom walking'! Taking our own time. Doing our own thing.

What large river crossings. Wild river crossings. How I'd love to see these rivers in

flood. The old Pompolona Hut was washed away - right away! Look, there's the new hut. Ah, a little more generous. But the sleeping accommodation is NOT! Wall to wall vinyl covered mattresses. A smoky room filled with human sardines! Two well-separated ones have our names on them. I do not sleep a wink.

We leave early. Another windless, sunny day. I pace along amongst white alpine, flower-spattered hillsides. I'm way behind Lawrie. And I'm singing my heart out. Joy can't be kept inside.

Oy! Lawrie! What IS that up there? Way up there! Yes. You're right. It's the TOP. It's clouds. Clouds swirling, twisting, flowing. Lighter than light, clouds. Billowing, swirling clouds pouring over the top. Over the McKinnon Pass. Let's get up there. C'mon, let's get up these last hills. Let's sing our way up. Let's make the hills "alive with the sound of music" together. See, we're there. No more UP for us. A looking down now. Down the way we've come. Did WE really climb right up here? Really? Oh, do look down to the rough stretch we have to do towards Clinton Hut. What a wonderful view down the valley. See how the track follows the snaking river. See how it sneaks in and out of Beech forests - now you see it - now you don't. And oh! Keas. Big, dark, curved-beak birds. Look at them. Oh, just look at them, lifting with the upstream clouds, disappearing in the swirling clouds. What eerie calls, fading in the clouds. Keas, gliding now to our feet. What are they telling us? "Stop for a snack!" Well, why not. Let's celebrate with them. Share our snacks. Share our joy!

Off again. Goodbye Keas. Goodbye clouds. Hello hard work. This is really hard work, going down. Take care. Don't lean too far forward. Keep your balance. A cairn at the top remembered a dear lass who didn't!

Feet and legs SO tired. Pack pushing down hurts knees. Look up, not down. Look back to the Pass. Sheer wall. High mountains. Hey, here's a flat spot at last. Take a break. Have a snooze. Let's lie on our backs in the sun. We've earned it. Dumpling Hut can wait. We can arrive late!

Dumpling Hut. A dangerous flood area. Posts and emergency ropes. Don't let it rain! If it floods, the whole track from end to end stops. No-one is allowed to start the track from either end, and we'll be stuck here. DON'T let it rain!

How we revel in better sleeping arrangements. We are TOGETHER! We wake early. BUT TO RAIN! It's 7am. Let's get out of here!

Continued on next page.

From around the country continued

The track is wet and slippery. Trees dripping. Wet gear on. Slow going. Loose stones now. Take care. HEAVY boots. STOP! Don't be so engrossed with the track. Look UP. Look at these magnificent Beech trees - awe inspiring in the rain. STOP! Take in the waterfalls - the rushing river. Now, take care on this swaying swing bridge. We don't want to end up down THERE! We're wet enough. We are SO wet. Wet and bedraggled. But happily wet and bedraggled.

Laughing, singing, enjoying. 'Freedom walking' the Milford Track in the rain. Heaven!

But we must walk fast. The boat goes at 2. Walk fast. Faster! Sing! Keep one foot following another. What about lunch? Can't stop. Eat as we walk as fast as we can.

Ah! There's the boat. Seven hours fast-as-you-can 'freedom walking' in the rain. We've made it. We did it. What's more, we loved it. Where's the next 'freedom walk'? Who was it that raved about the Hollyford Track?

THE STORM

In the distance you can see it coming.
Clouds race across the sky,
blocking the sunlight,
darkness descends.

Storms here are the wildest things
I have ever seen.
Sheets of rain come in a relentless,
torrential downpour.

When the wind blows, it howls
fiercely through the wilderness,
tossing trees in every direction,
branches crack and fall.

Trees are uprooted from the sodden earth,
the bush flies and swirls about
as nature's anarchy unfurls.
Only the mountains stand unmoved.

Loud thunder cracks,
shaking heaven and earth.
Just for a second lightning strikes turning
this darkest world into the brightest day.

The vast spectacle and power is awesome,
nothing man-made can compare to this
exhilarating and dramatic cosmic display.

Just as suddenly as it started,
the tempest stops, the storm passes,
light and silence come once more
to the glistening, refreshed bush.

Steven Katsineris March 2002



Worth Repeating

The sly dog: study says our dingo came from Indonesia

Stephen Cauchi Science Reporter

The origins of the dingo whose ancestry and time of origin have long been a puzzle now seems to be settled after DNA analysis by Australian, Swedish and New Zealand scientists.

It seems the dog was introduced by settlers from Indonesia about 5000 years ago, not India as a rival theory had it.

Furthermore, Australia's entire dingo population stems from very few dogs - maybe just one female - and these ancestral dogs were probably domesticated.

A report on the research co-written by geneticist Alan Wilton of the University of NSW, is published in this week's American journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"The evidence shows little genetic variation in the dingo, which implies that the founding population must have been just a few dogs - perhaps even a single pregnant female," said Dr Wilton.

"The DNA evidence tells us they can be traced, back to a common female ancestor that came to Australia about 5000 years ago, probably by boat from one of the Indonesian islands. This matches the fossil evidence - a time when there was a lot of movement of people in Asia," he said.

Dr Wilton and four international colleagues compared mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) from 211 dingoes, 676 dogs from around the world, 38 Eurasian wolves and 19 dog fossils from Polynesia.

The researchers found that mtDNA in dingoes was either identical or nearly identical to a mtDNA type called A29. This type of DNA matched that of a type of domestic dog that lived

on the Indonesian archipelago. This DNA evidence matches the fossil record.

"The oldest known dingo skulls reveal short, wide skulls that suggest they were domesticated dogs," said Professor Mike Archer, a palaeontologist with the University of NSW.

"As palaeontologists we have long been



convinced that dingoes were introduced by people as a domesticated animal, probably in small breeding populations. We are now seeing confirmation of this through new genetic research," he said.

Once introduced to Australia, however, these domesticated dogs escaped into the wild, becoming dingoes.

The rival Indian theory of introduction was based on the skeletal similarity of the dingo to Indian pariah dogs and wolves. As well, certain types of stone tools appeared in Australia at the same time as the dingo - tools that may have had an Indian origin.

Although Aborigines have used dingoes as pets or in hunting, full domestication has been difficult because of the dog's independent nature.

Source: *The Age* July 2004

Changes in Membership Fees

Membership subscriptions are due on 1/01/05.

New rates are \$20 for individual, joint or family. \$10 concession. We are no longer offering a 3 year discount.

Library Update

By Judy Green

Have you got any of these?

The following books are missing from the library at the park and they have not been entered in the borrower's book so we are unable to chase them up. Some have been missing for quite a long time. Could you please check your bookshelves for the following:

A&R 105, EN 504, EN 524, FL 630, M 804, W 1202, W 1203.



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Australian Admiral (*Vanessa itea*)

This attractive black, orange and cream butterfly is often spotted on warm summer days flying around the edge of the river seeking out the native nettle (*Urtica incisa*). The butterfly lays its eggs on the underside of the leaves. When the caterpillars hatch they make a shelter amongst the nettles upon which they feed.

Warning. Do not attempt to examine any leaf shelter without wearing gloves as the coarse hairs on the serrated leaves will give you a painful sting.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Membership \$20

Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

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