



Friends of Warrandyte S P Newsletter

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

EDITORIAL

It has been an exceptionally busy few weeks for the Friends, particularly the last weekend in June. On the Saturday afternoon a full bus load of representatives from various environmental community groups came to visit. This was part of a field trip organised by Jack Dinkgreve from the Melbourne Parks & Waterways Network. Then on the Sunday we had our general meeting followed by a BBQ and family activity at Stane Brae

The latest news on the staffing front direct from David Nugent (Chief Ranger for the Port Phillip area) is that, since Matt Le Duc was moved by the Department to Woori Yallock, the position of Ranger-in-Charge has not been advertised. However, we are told that a replacement RIC will be sent to Warrandyte in August for 6 months. Another ongoing concern is the future of the depot. When asked, David also assured us that the WSP depot would not, like so many others in the State, be closed down.

We have a slightly new look to the newsletter this month with changes to the front page and also the

inclusion of some photos. Both colour and black and white photographs are able to be scanned for the newsletter by Rachel and Mark from *Visual Attention Desktop Publishing* who are now photocopying the newsletter each month.

Once again the bias towards flora in the newsletter is back. We do need more articles on fauna as well as other articles of environmental interest both on the local scene and from around the State.

Finally a reminder of the 'suggestion box' located in the Folly at Pound Bend depot. The committee urges Fowspians to voice their opinions - for example - which are preferred, morning or afternoon activities, maybe you would like to suggest a particular activity. You tell us. The committee meets regularly every month to discuss such matters and the minutes from each meeting are pinned up on the notice board in the Folly. We look forward to hearing from you, the members who make this group the great success that it is.

Pat Coupar

PLENTY GORGE TRIP

Date: Sunday August 4th

Time: Meet on site at 10.30am or leave Warrandyte at 9.45am

Place: Works depot Gordons Rd off Plenty Rd (Melways ref. 183 H8)

This is a fantastic opportunity to see the Plenty Gorge MP&W Park. In the morning we will be given a guided tour of the wetland area and during the afternoon we will be taken on a orchid walk. BBQ lunch will be provided - bring a salad to share. It promises to be a great day.

If you are interested in coming put your name on the list in the Folly or phone Cecilia Le Duc on 9722 1926 so that numbers for catering can be passed on to Scott (ranger at Plenty Gorge) and so that we can arrange a car pool if required.

FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

- July 18th** **Koala Walk - Pound Bend** *Meet at the depot at 1.15pm*
It's time to count Warrandyte's koalas again. Ranger Brian Phefley will lead the walk give us an update on the numbers and health of these special marsupials.
Leader Brian Phefley. Meet at the depot Pound Bend. (Melways ref. map 23 C10)
- July 25th** **Visit the Traill's** MORNING ACTIVITY *Meet on site at 10.am*
Al and Carol Traill have kindly offered to show us round their property at Wonga Park. Come and see the fantastic wetland Al has created as well as some locally rare and endangered plants. Soup will be provided.
Leader Al & Carol Traill. Meet at 'Narr-meian', Freyne St Wonga Park (Melways ref. map 36 D3)
- Aug 1st** **Spadoni's Reserve** *Leave Depot at 1.00pm OR meet on site at 1.30pm*
A walk around one of the dwindling billabongs beside the Yarra River. This reserve is home to the rare Buxton and Yarra Gums.
Leader Pat Coupar. Meet at the end of Victoria Rd Coldstream (Melways ref. map 274 E8)
- Aug 8th** **Flora Management System (FMS) workshop.** *Meet at the Depot 1.15pm*
Learn about Warrandyte's unique FMS view maps and photographs of rare plants. Followed (if time) by a walk on Pound Bend Ridge to see examples of some flora management.
Leader Ranger David Van Bockel. Meet at the Folly WSP Depot, Pound Bend Rd. (Melways ref map 23 C10)
- Aug 15th** **Wattle Identification Walk** MORNING ACTIVITY *Meet on site at 10.00am*
Late winter is the perfect time to see some of Warrandyte's 25 species (16 native & 9 introduced) of wattle and there is no better place to see them than Fourth Hill.
Leader Cathy Willis. Meet at the Fiddler Gully car park on the right hand side of Webb St. (Melways ref. map 35 G3)
- Aug 22nd** **Visit to Yarra Valley. Park Nursery.** *Leave Depot at 1.00pm or meet on site at 1.30pm*
A guided tour of our neighbouring Park's nursery for some sharing of ideas.
Leader Elizabeth Sevier. Meet at Westerfolds Park off Fitzsimons La. (Melways ref. map 33 G1)
- Aug 29th** **Discover The Common.** MORNING ACTIVITY *Meet on site at 10.00am*
The forgotten reserve. The Common is home to a mob of around 100 kangaroos as well as a number of rare and special plants.
Leader Joan MacMahon. Meet at Haslams Tk the first car park on the left (Melways ref. map 36 A3)

Stane Brae Working Bee -Sunday June 30th

Following the general meeting 13 members made their way out to Stane Brae for a BBQ lunch, some planting, weeding and a walk. For some members it was the first time they had been to this part of the Park. After lunch around an impromptu table in the big shed, half the group planted several boxes of grasses, acacias and eucalypts in the two existing coupes, while the rest pulled nightshade from the old house site.

Ben was sure that divots from last seasons plantings were wombat droppings. Although they were in the shape of a forestry tube, it took some time to explain to him that wombats do not have square rear ends!

Following the work we went for a walk along the river track towards Yarra Brae to look for orchids, we were not disappointed. Several species were found in abundance including Gnat Orchid (*Acianthus pusillus*), Autumn Bird Orchid (*Chiloglottis reflexa*) and several greenhoods (*Pterostylis spp.*).

We still have a lot of work to do in this lesser known area of the Park, so any help members can give will be much appreciated. Thank you to all who came out to Stane Brae and for a great afternoon.

Report by Ron Taylor

POUND BEND COUPE - A Review

June 10th 1996

It is three years ago today that I arrived at the Warrandyte State Park Nursery early and found Ranger David Van Bockel, Margaret Burke and Cathy Willis deep in serious conversation. The result was that I was asked to take responsibility for the revegetation area at the Pound Bend depot which had acquired the name of the Coupe.

Three years later I look at the Coupe now and review the past labours:

Now it is a flourishing area of young trees, bushes and low ground covers. I love to be in the midst of it. Extra thrills ripple through me when I come upon a koala sitting in one of our tasty Manna Gums, looking down on me with that special koala gaze. This has happened on three occasions now. The koalas climb the rabbit proof fence, locate a likely tree, eat their fill and leave.

All the year birds visit the Coupe. The thick bushy nature of the vegetation please the Blue Wrens and the Red-browed Firetails. Workers in the Coupe have also seen Yellow-rumped and Striated Thornbills, Welcome Swallows, young Kookaburras, Magpies, Rosellas, Jacky Winters and Grey Fantails. Blackbirds are not so welcome. I suspect two may be building a nest in a dense part of the tree growth. On the other hand kangaroos are most welcome. Rangers have noticed one or two on several occasions.

So how has this happy state of affairs come about? Firstly other people joined in when the work was just plain toil. Neal Tessier helped tremendously with cutting and man-handling the carpet underlay which was our first weapon against an ever growing wall of weeds. He also wheeled countless barrow loads of sawdust mulch to spread on top of the carpet. We both wonder how many barrow loads we filled and trundled up



and down the slope. We are relieved to have that part finished! Neal also created dams to stop the rush of water and precious mulch downhill after heavy rain.

The Park Staff came silently along when we were resting at home and sprayed the weeds on many occasions. It was a constant battle.

Cathy and Pat's weeding operation was vital. Finally a team from Greenlink came and finished the mulching for us. I give thanks for their work every time I am in the coupe. I hope those young unemployed people realize how helpful their work was at that stage of the process.

Secondly, when all was ready, the school children arrived on an arbor day and planted hundreds of trees, shrubs, ground covers and creeping, indigenous 'spreaders'. They also sowed seeds of various trees which have germinated and are growing well.

Thirdly, the coupe has needed constant loving care. A wheelbarrow of weeds taken out each Thursday and regular planting of local small plants keeps things moving along. We look forward to the next stage of growth in Endeavour Bank along the river. One day we hope that the two areas will be joined together.

Report by Elizabeth Seviour

List of species for the Coupe

Upper storey trees

Eucalyptus viminalis (Manna Gum)
E. radiata (Narrow-leaved Peppermint)
E. polyanthemos (Red Box)
E. goniocalyx (Long-leaved Box)
E. obliqua (Messmate)
E. ovata (Swamp Gum)
E. melliodora (Yellow Box)
Acacia dealbata (Silver Wattle)
A. mearnsii (Black Wattle)
A. melanoxylon (Blackwood)

Middle storey

Allocasuarina littoralis (Black She-oak)
Acacia pycnantha (Golden Wattle)
A. verticillata (Prickly Moses)
Cassinia longifolia (Shiny Cassinia)
C. arcuata (Drooping Cassinia)
Bursaria spinosa (Sweet Bursaria)
Leptospermum continentale (Prickly Tea-tree)
Prostanthera lasianthos (Vic. Xmas Bush)
Goodenia ovata (Hop Goodenia)

Grasses & sedges

Poa labillardieri (Tussock Grass)
P. ensiformis (Tussock Grass)
Microlaena stipoides (Weeping Grass)
Danthonia spp (Wallaby Grass)
Carex appressa (Tall Sedge)
Carex iynx (Sedge)

Ground Covers

Acaena novae-zelandiae (Bidgee Widgee)
Viola hederacea (Ivy-leaf Violet)
Dichondra repens (Kidney Weed)
Veronica plebeia (Trailing Speedwell)
Hardenbergia violacea (Purple Coral-pea)

In addition *Juncus spp* (Rushes) and *Epilobium hirtigerum* (Hairy Willow-herb) have self sown

God bless HMAS FOWSP and all who sail in her!

A warm day - the sun's rays are reflected in the Yarra's cascading waters - currents swirl through the gorge - above is a flurry of bird activity amongst the vegetation on the steep slopes - past the rapids is a beach - a perfect place to swim - to be the river and the river you.

Well you can experience all this and more, because FOWSP has just purchased a canoe! To qualify to use it you must be a FOWSP member over the age of 18. If so, just phone Ron Taylor (number on the back page) for a booking, fix a set of roof bars onto your car and off you go. All we ask in return is that you take a note of any weeds, pick up some rubbish or pull some Yellow Iris along the way. The canoe is a 'Rapid Rider look-alike'. It has plenty of space inside, is relatively light to carry and comfortable for its crew of two. The only thing you need to be careful about are rocks which might damage the fibre glass.



THE HALDEBEEEST GOES WEST

To all our dear friends,

Because Warrandyte is such a very special place, full of such very special people, we thought we should extend its western boundary.

Please come and share our big adventure at

The School House

RMB 7330

Minhamite 3287 phone 055 766 227

All our love, Joy & Hildebrand

WEEKEND WORK

Additional FOWSP activities meeting on

SATURDAY

opportunity for weekaday workers, students & the keen

FOLLY AT POUND BEND: 10 am

If interested ring Ant Owen 9844 1344

Letting in the Light

It was almost two years ago that Cathy Willis and I were given the opportunity to join the crew of 'Save the Bush' who had been contracted to eradicate Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*) from a corner of Timber Reserve in the Warrandyte State Park. Although we had both completed the herbicide training course for volunteers, neither of us at that time had experience of drilling and filling¹ in the bush.

The area in which we were working contained probably the most dense concentration of Pittosporum anywhere in the Park. Over three days six of us drilled and filled hundreds of these Gippsland invaders both large and small, including some multi-trunked trees that had regrown following unsuccessful cutting and painting². In addition thousands of seedlings were hand pulled.

Following the death of the Pittosporums a fence was erected by Park Staff around the site. Then, at about this time last year 'Friends' and Rangers planted several hundred grasses and ground covers in bare patches beneath the dead trees.

Returning to the site almost a year later I was surprised and delighted at the growth that had taken place. The plants, watered only once at the time of planting, had proliferated - particularly successful were the Ivy-leaf Violet (*Viola hederacea*), Kidney Weed (*Dichondra repens*) and Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*). The only slight disappointment was the Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*) which had been planted along the bottom fence line and been out-competed by grassy weeds.

The natural regeneration that was taking place was very encouraging - seedlings of Common Heath (*Epacris impressa*), so difficult to propagate under nursery conditions, had pushed their way healthily through the emerald moss. Likewise Grey Parrot-pea (*Dillwynia cinerascens*) and Pink Bells (*Tetratheca ciliata*) had also appeared. But most spectacular of all was the Tree Everlasting (*Ozothamnus ferrugineus*), literally thousands had germinated inside the fence - some about a metre tall. Looking back neither Cathy or I remembered seeing adults of

this plant two years ago. This species has a quite staggering ability to regenerate from seed following fire or disturbance. On this occasion, however, the trigger was simply letting in the light and keeping out the rabbits (the massive germination of Tree Everlasting was not evident outside the fence even though Pittosporums has been killed in this area too).

After seeing the site plans for our Thursday morning activity were rapidly changed. Instead of more planting we drilled and filled a few left-over Pittosporums and some large Irish Strawberry trees (*Arbutus unedo*). We also hand pulled seedling Pittosporums and dug up mats of corms belonging to Bridal Creeper (*Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*).

As often happens on these occasions there was an added bonus for the morning. A seedling of Wonga Vine (*Pandorea pandorana*) was found in a small depression inside the fence. This plant is rare in Warrandyte S P with the number of individuals being less than a dozen none of which occur at Timber Reserve. This immediately begs the question how did it get there? Was the seed lying dormant in the soil or did it blow in? Whichever, the effect of letting in the light was that this Warrandyte rarity germinated.

Incidentally the Wonga Vine seedling was discovered by long-time Fowspian Jan Tindale (of Warrandyte Diary fame) whose first ever article for our newsletter appears in this issue. Well done Jan, not only a good journalist but a good botanist as well!

Report by Pat Coupar

1 Drill & fill: Drilling holes at regular intervals around the trunk below all side shoots and filling immediately with herbicide from a spot gun.

2 Cut & paint: Cutting trunks close to the ground and immediately painting with herbicide.



Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*)

FROGLAND

It was four years ago that the area now know as 'Froglan' was created from a weed infested wasteland beside the entrance road to WSP depot at Pound Bend.

This gently sloping site was a repository for all the storm water run off from the road as well as the nutrient-rich run off from the nursery. As a consequence the normally fairly dry slope was awash with the luxuriant growth of introduced grasses such as Yorkshire Fog and Sweet Vernal and the troublesome Drain Flat-sedge.

Park Staff and their machinery excavated a hole which filled naturally with water; weeds were smothered with carpet underlay and wood shavings. Aquatic, semi-aquatic and other rare species propagated at the nursery were installed and have flourished. A grant was obtained from Melbourne Parks & Waterways to build a board-walk to protect the delicate ground covers.

Over the four years of its existence Froglan has had a number of custodians, notably Helga Hagen in the early days, then Angie Stefanotis and more recently Jenny Hoskin. Ron Taylor did a magnificent job constructing the board-walk and like myself still has a special affinity for the place.

While looking through some old photos, Jan Tindale came across one she had taken just after the construction of 'Froglan', at a recent Thursday afternoon activity at the site she repeated the photo - hard to believe that it's the same place.

Report by Pat Coupar

Top: Froglan 1992
Bottom: Froglan 1996



Sedge Secrets Revealed on a Misty Pound Bend Morning

It was a cold, foggy morning on June 5th the day we gathered at Pound Bend picnic ground to learn all about grasses, sedges and rushes. Our leaders, Pat and Cathy, had set up on a table samples of the plants we might expect to see on our walk along the river track back to the Folly. They handed out information leaflets.

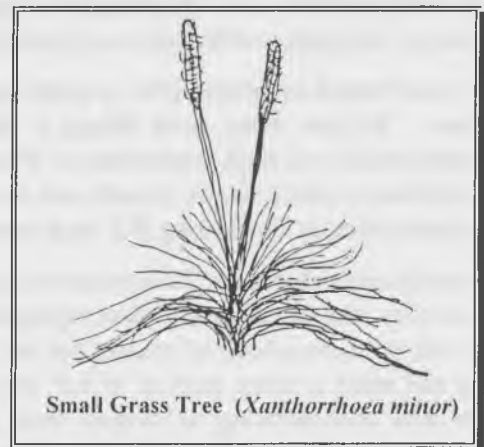
Cathy (and the leaflet) told us what to look for - leaves could either have a ligule (in which case they were a grass) or not (something else), they could be flat, channelled, irregular or inrolled. Flowering stems could be cylindrical, triangular, flattened or hollow (with or without pith). According to the leaflet, the plants we were looking for today were all monocotyledons (one seed leaf).

From working in the nursery I knew grasses as either *Poa* (tussock) or *Danthonia* (wallaby). But my leaflet said there were 75 different species of grasses from 44 genera growing in Warrandyte.

I thought I might go and look for koalas instead!

Sedges were next - only 22 of them from 6 genera. This was getting easier all the time. I already knew sedges as large tussocks with basal leaves from a main root, but I was not prepared for the *Isolepis*. More about that soon.

On to the rushes - only 15 species from one genus (*Juncus*). It had been nice of Cathy to start high and work down. Finally there were the mat-rushes and grass trees, only 5 species from 2 genera. I asked Cathy if the little grass tree growing in a pot was related to the Blackboy and she said it was, in fact, a Blackboy. It did not have the trunk or spike which most people associate with blackboys because *a*) it was a different species which does not develop the characteristic trunk and *b*) it was too young to produce a flowering spike.



Small Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea minor*)

It was still foggy as we walked back along the river track over wooden bridges towards the Folly. It paid us to keep our eyes to the ground. Apart from grasses (too many to mention here) we came upon *Isolepis*! I was amazed to learn that what, as a little kid, I had regarded as a weed with which to decorate a bowl of tadpoles or minnows taken from Dabyminga Creek near Tallarook was an essential native plant. I now know it as a sedge and will treat it with the respect it deserves.

As we moved on Cathy and Pat were excited to find a small patch of Blady Grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), one of Warrandyte's rarest grass species proliferating amongst the Saw-sedge (*Gahnia radula*), which was now growing densely following the 1991 bushfire.

It was a most rewarding walk among the grasses, sedges and rushes, but I must confess now that I cheated. I saw four koalas as well.

Report by Jan Tindale

Editors note: The leaflet (cheat sheet) to which Jan refers is available from FOWSP along with a leaflet on Warrandyte's eucalypts and soon to be released will be another one on Warrandyte's wattles. For more information ring Pat (9844 1650) or Cathy (9844 1841) or call in at the market stall.

MELB. PARKS & WATERWAYS GRANTS PROGRAM CENTRAL YARRA REGION COMMUNITY NETWORK BUS TRIP 29 Jun 96

Upon the bus MPW staff Phil Lenthal and Jack Dinkgreve introduced themselves and told us their program funded **land management agencies** (Councils, Committees of Management, Vicroads, DCNREFLNPWS, MPW, Docklands etc) and **community groups** in the development of parkland and waterways in Melbourne. Of \$8,640,633.. in 95/96, 81 community groups obtained \$240,106 for 93 projects. Agencies got the millions (8.3) for 133 projects. Phil Lenthal says money was well spent on community groups. For a couple of reasons I reckon.

"The open space vision for this region is to refine the existing open space network, developing and enhancing visitor facilities at Yarra Valley Parklands, Warrandyte State Park, Wattle Park, Ruffey Lake Park, improving facilities and environmental values along the Yarra River, extending major trail networks and managing areas of botanical and zoological significance to ensure their long term viability."

We visited Peninsula Paddock at **Yarra Flats** with Riverland Conservation Society of Heidelberg (south off Manningham Rd. after crossing the river before getting into Heidelberg); Friends of **Yarra Valley Park Nursery** at Y.V.M.P. Westerfolds, heard about **Candlebark Project** (Y.V.M.P. between Westerfolds and Pettys) from Doncaster/ Templestowe Conservation Society; to **Tuscany Rise Reserve** off Porter St. managed * by local residents and Manningham Council; **Currawong Bush Park** (Reynolds Rd.); and **Warrandyte S.P.** Coupe, Frogland and Nursery and Linda Bromilow described the works at **Pigeon Bank Creek**.

A great bunch of people (50) in great locations with a shared vision, thanks to organisation of MPW program team. We saw many good things, a few including: broadacre plantings of *Acacia spp* at Yarra Flats; good organisation and high production at Westerfolds Nursery; valuable planning tools at Candlebark Project; good neighbourly involvement, results and a new "suregro" forest at Tuscany Rise; a very natural looking wetland rehabilitation at Currawong B.P. and everybody remarked on the carpet and participation rates at W.S.P.

Participants came from 21 community groups: Friends of, Management Committees, Landcare, Conservation Societies, etc, in addition to sites representatives and M.P.W. program and park staff. There wasn't opportunity to talk with everybody of course, but we made acquaintance and contacts and have a number of issues to follow up and ideas to share back at W.S.P. It was interesting to note the variety of issues different people were there for and concentrating on within their group, membership & sponsorship issues, community education & participation, propagation & revegetation techniques, politics, employment and otherwise a good time.

Report by Ant Owen

BITS AND PIECES

1) **Thank you** to those folk who were formerly on our complimentary list for the newsletter and who are now paid-up-members. The extra funds have helped to offset the costs we now incur for printing.

2) **Future directions group.** Interested in a bit of brain-storming ? Ant is keen to have an ideas gathering session around the topic of our future and how we can become an even bigger and better organisation, with a greater emphasis on young people. Interested? Please phone Ant.

3) **Mistletoe Mysteries.** The Field Naturalists Club is conducting a weekend forum on all aspects of these intriguing plants. On Sat. 31 August papers will be presented at FNCV House, 1 Gardenia Street, Blackburn. A bus trip the next day will take you to forest and farmland in areas north-west of Melbourne as well as to the Brisbane Ranges.

We have at least four types of mistletoe in the Warrandyte area; Drooping, Box and Creeping occur on our eucalypts, while Grey is restricted to wattles. They are important plants, since the leaves, flowers and berries are food sources for various birds and caterpillars.

For further information call FNCV on 9877 9860.

4) **Sick of rabbits?** If your place is plagued with rabbits you might like to write to Howard Whelan, editor of AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHIC (PO box 321 Terrey Hills, NSW 2084) He is planning a report on the effect of rabbit calicivirus and wants to hear from people currently battling rabbits.

A Very Productive Partnership

Editors note: I was reading through recent newsletters of the Friends of Warrandyte State Park and was immeasurably impressed at the efforts that are summarised in the articles repeated here. I was impressed on several fronts. First the dedication and thoroughness of the rangers and friends is phenomenal. Secondly, I thought this was an excellent example of economic efficiency and partnership between public and private. The State Government is meeting much of its legal and moral obligation to protect biodiversity in the park with little expenditure (knowing what you have and how much is an incredibly important part of conservation). The value of the money spent on a ranger has been multiplied many times through an active engagement with a community group. If only every park was so blessed with such a productive partnership...

These comments were made by Lincoln Kern, editor of *Indynotes* - the monthly newsletter of IFFA (Indigenous Flora & Fauna Association). Such praise from such a well respected organisation should, we thought, be passed on to

all FOWSP members (and indeed to the Department). It is only with the continuing support and encouragement from members, that the kind of work to which Lincoln refers has been possible. Knowledge within the group is increasing all the time. General propagation mornings every Thursday and special project research mornings on Tuesdays are well attended and the interest in the Thursday afternoon program has been excellent.

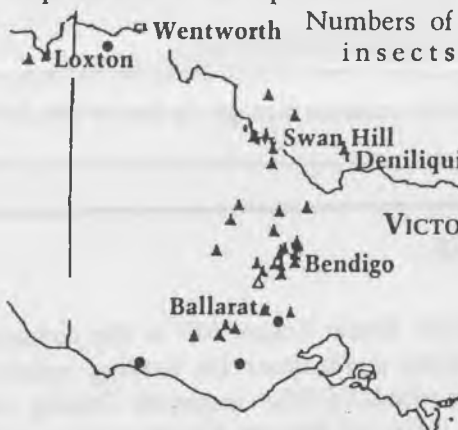
Likewise, rangers involved in the rare plant assessment and monitoring program have had support from their Ranger-in-Charge, firstly Ian Roche and particularly in the last two years Matt Le Duc who instigated the Flora Management Team.

Finally, as mentioned before in one of the articles, we have been exceptionally lucky to have had the advice and guidance of botanical experts including Cam Beardsell, Graeme Lorimer and David Cameron.

The two articles reprinted in *Indynotes* were 'Spot On' and 'Warrandyte State Park Plant List' from the April and May newsletters respectively.

RCD UPDATE

Rabbit Calicivirus Disease has been confirmed at sites from Ballarat in the south to Swan Hill in northern Victoria (see map). The patchy and unpredictable rate of spread of the virus means that traditional control techniques must be maintained *in the short term* and *long term*. Vectors seem to be responsible for the spread of RCD.



fluctuate but are usually at their peak in Autumn and Spring. NRE staff have completed strategies to take effect if and when RCD is approved for legal release and would be interested to receive any reports of wildlife apparently affected by the decline in rabbits, impact of predators or other effects of the disease.

Further information: NRE Area RCD co-ordinators or the national RCD media officer, Kim Mitchell. Tel: (02) 380 0666.

Source: RCD Situation report 2/5/96.

RCD is distributed in a broad band running north-south through central Victoria at May 1996. New reports are being received on a regular basis.



Staff cuts affecting care of the environment, PS union warns

By TIM WINKLER environment reporter

Staff cuts in the Department of Natural Resources and Environment may jeopardise bushfire control, union officials said yesterday.

An industrial officer with the State Public Services Federation, Mr Darren Martin, said jobs were being cut at the expense of fire control, land protection and nature conservation management.

"Workers don't know when the cuts are going to stop. It's got to impact on service delivery," he said.

Internal departmental documents had raised concern about the capacity to fight fires this summer, Mr Martin said. The department would still hire casual fire crew, leaving fewer permanent staff to supervise, he said.

Last summer, staff from as far away as Portland were called to help fight a fire in the Little Desert in the Wimmera, Mr Martin said. If several fires broke in one area, the department would struggle to cope, even with the help of the Country Fire Authority, he said.

Mr Martin said the trend of large staff cuts in the former department of Conservation and Natural Resources was being continued in the new Natural Resources and Environment Department.

The Age revealed yesterday that staffing levels in the former department had been cut from the equivalent of 4567 full-time positions in October 1992 to 2723 in June 1995.

Mr Martin said sources believed staff responsible for conservation in the new department would be cut to about 1600 positions by next June. Several offices in regional towns would also be closed, he said. Fewer staff meant poorer management of natural

resources, Mr Martin said. The catchment management and sustainable agriculture area of the new department had successfully dealt with land management through the LandCare program, but was being cut from 139 positions to 107, he said. The cuts translated into inferior land management, he said. Workers could not see an end to the cuts and had to cope with increased workloads, Mr Martin said.

He said a staff survey conducted by the union last year received more than 500 responses, of which more than 80 per cent said morale was low and more than 90 per cent said their workload was higher.

The department's ability to be the country's best land and natural resource manager was rated low

by 80 per cent of respondents and 96 per cent said staffing had fallen to critical levels.

Mr Martin said the survey showed that workers thought the department lacked vision. Conservation groups have also criticised the department for its lack of strategy in national parks management and its shortage of staff to manage the environment.

A Government spokeswoman said savings from staff cuts in the former department had been directed to extra services and funding for groups working with land issues. In the new department, services for operational work had not been reduced, she said.

"... we intend to maintain our commitment of service to rural Victoria in national parks, land care and agricultural forestry," she said.

Talks with the union on staffing issues would continue, she said.

Source: *The Age* Tuesday July 9th

CRITICAL CUTS

The union conducted a survey of employees in the former department of Conservation and Natural Resources. More than 500 staff responded:

- 80% said morale was low or very low
- 90% said their workload was higher or much higher than previously.
- 80% rated the departments ability to be Australia's best land and natural resources manager as low or very low
- 96% said staff numbers had fallen below critical mass.

Grants Success

Last week we received some fantastic news. A letter from Hon. Marie Tehan, MP to the committee informing us that we had been successful in all three of our grant applications for funding under the Melbourne Parks & Waterways Program. The three projects for which FOWSP requested funding were *Frogland - Stage 2* (\$4,380.00), *Nursery Renovation - Stage 5* (\$1,100), and *Fencing Significant Vegetation* (\$4,500.00). A total of just under ten thousand dollars.

If you would like more information on the projects themselves just ring the following contact people: *Frogland* Ron Taylor 9844 4285, *Nursery Renovation* Don Cameron 9844 2389, *Significant vegetation* Pat Coupar 9844 1650.

Dates for your Diary

JULY

- Wed 17th** Koornong sub-group
Contact: *Cathy Willis* 9844 1841
- Thurs 18th** Koala Walk (see thurs. prog. for details)
Contact: *Ranger Brian Phefley* 9844 2659
- Thurs 25th** Visit to the Traill's (see thurs. prog. for details)
Contact: *Al Traill* 9722 1518

- Thurs 8th** Flora Management System (see thurs. prog. for details)
Contact: *Ranger David Van Bockel* 9844 2659
- Thurs 15th** Wattle Identification Walk (see thurs. prog. for details)
Contact: *Cathy Willis* 9844 1841
- Thurs 22nd** Yarra Valley Nursery (see thurs. prog. for details)
Contact: *Elizabeth Sevier* 9852 1737

AUGUST

- Thurs 1st** Spadoni's Reserve (see thurs. prog. for details)
Contact: *Pat Coupar* 9844 1650
- Sat 3rd** Warrandyte Market
Contact: *Betty Oke* 9844 3763
- Sun 4th** Plenty Gorge Trip (see ad. this newsletter)
Contact: *Cecilia Le Duc* 9722 1926
- Wed 7th** Koornong sub-group
Contact: *Cathy Willis* 9844 1841

- Thurs 29th** Discover The Common (see thurs. prog. for details)
Contact: *Joan MacMahon* 9844 3213

Note: There will be no Sunday family activity this month due to the Plenty Gorge trip.

SEPTEMBER

- Sat 7th** Warrandyte Market
Contact: *Betty Oke* 9844 3763

Any sub-group or individual who would like to advertise an environmental activity in this newsletter please ring Pat Coupar on 9844 1650

General Meeting - Sunday June 30th

As advertised, a general meeting was held in the Folly on June 30th. The main business of the meeting was to discuss amendments to the FOWSP constitution and to bring members up to date with Park Staffing levels.

Although not the best of days weather-wise, 15 members attended, the majority of whom were quite vocal. The constitution was discussed and amendments were made to allow the committee to operate as a collective the way we have been doing since we were formed. Voting rights of members were discussed in particular where families were concerned.

It was agreed that any family member over the age of 16 living at the same address would have voting rights. The general feeling of members at the meeting was that, as a consequence, subscriptions will change when due next year to \$15 single and \$20 for family membership.

Mike Coupar outlined the latest information from the Department on Staffing levels. All members present felt that more needs to be done to pressure for more staff at Warrandyte, possibly in conjunction with other groups in the region.

All present felt that the meeting was most constructive and that several possible issues were raised. If you would like more details, a copy of the minutes from the meeting are pinned up on the notice board in the Folly. Thanks goes to those members that attended.

Report by Ron Taylor



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