

February 1998

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park Newsletter



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

THE AGE 2  
SATURDAY 17 JANUARY 1998

## BUSHFIRES

**Mike Coupar,**  
spokesman,  
Friends of the  
Warrandyte State Park,  
Warrandyte

Your story Death of a National Park (10/1) told us how a unique treasure will be changed forever due to the 32,000 hectare bushfire in the Alpine National Park. Mr Kennett is right to criticise the irresponsible camping party who failed to control their campfire.

However, it is also a sad fact that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, that has the misfortune to deal with these catastrophes, has been seriously and systematically downgraded since the term of the Kennett Government.

As the spokesman for the Friends of the Warrandyte State Park, I can confirm that, despite recent additions to the park, there are considerably fewer rangers and work crew compared to five years ago.

Regrettably, this situation is reflected throughout the state. Employing 800 temporary firefighters this season is a welcome move, but it is also essential to maintain an adequate number of permanent staff.

Clearly what has happened is that there are now far fewer rangers and work crews to maintain fire access tracks, provide proper camping and barbecue areas and to control the small number of people who abuse nature and the safety of others who visit our precious national parks.

## Mullum Mullum Festival program

Opening Day is in

**THE GORGE COUNTRY**

Sunday 15th March 12.30pm

at Schwerkolt Cottage, Deep Ck. Road (49D7)

12.30pm musical welcome

1.20pm walks along Mullum-Mullum Ck. with Bruce Fuhrer, Dr. Terry Coates and Geoff Carr.

**CREEK SOURCE**

Saturday 21st March

Croydon/North Ringwood

**OPEN VALLEY**

Sunday 22nd March

Mullum-Mullum Ck. Linear Park. East Doncaster/Donvale

**MEETING PLACE**

Sunday 29th March

Tikalara Park. Templestowe/Warrandyte

For further and more up to date information phone

Cameron Taylor

96540023



Artwork by Ant Owen

## Weather Update

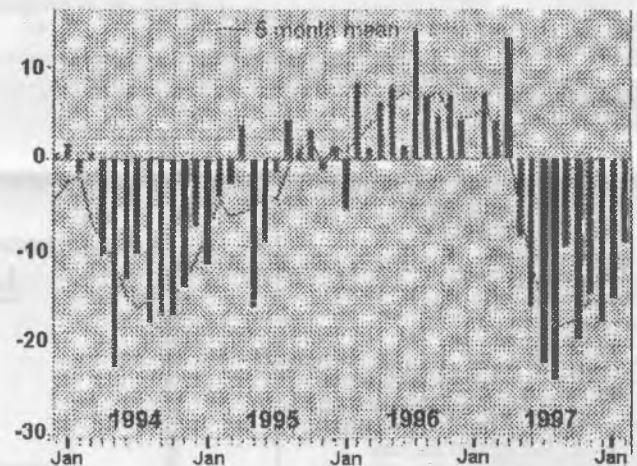
In the latest bulletin from the Bureau of Meteorology issued on January the 5th, Mr Bill Kininmonth, Head of the National Climate Centre, said that despite the continuing strong characteristics of the El Niño event, there were some signs of a weakening influence of El Niño on Australia's weather in the tropical north.

"Sea surface temperatures in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean remain at up to 5 degrees C above normal, but the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) rose by six points during December to a value of -9. Also, sea surface temperatures around tropical Australia are more than 1 degree C warmer than normal thus providing a local source of moisture", he said.

December rainfall totals in tropical Australia were average to above average, reaching record levels in southern parts of the Gulf of Carpentaria as a result of tropical cyclone "Sid". "Although it is more usual for early wet season tropical rains to be suppressed and for a break down of El Niño's influence around February or March, an early onset of summer tropical rains is not unprecedented in an El Niño", said Mr Kininmonth.

Although recent trends in the climate pattern bode well for Australia's tropics, it is too early to say whether the pattern will persist. Based on statistics, there remains an increased risk of drier than normal weather through much of Queensland as well as eastern and northern New South Wales. Elsewhere however, the statistical guidance is inconclusive at this time of year.

Residents of southern Australia should be aware of the continuing high fire danger, particularly in the dry areas of Victoria, southern NSW, southern Western Australia, and eastern Tasmania.



## Worth Repeating

### Time to go with the flow

By Sasha Baskett

The natural beauty of the Yarra River will be preserved for future generations under a new State Government management plan.

The Yarra is one of 18 rivers and 26 catchments selected by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment for protection under the Heritage Rivers Act.

Draft plans to maintain the natural condition of the rivers were released yesterday for public comment.

The chosen section of the Yarra River flows between Warburton and Warrandyte and includes the O'Shannassy natural catchment. The section has outstanding natural, recreational, cultural and scenic value, said DNRE executive director of parks, flora and fauna, Mark Stone.

The section of the river includes two state listed flora species and 21 significant fauna species, he said it is a popular spot for canoeing and picnics and includes several archaeological sites.

Mr Stone said the plans would ensure heritage values were protected while also allowing appropriate uses.

The plans cover protecting the habitat for aquatic flora and fauna managing the site as a wildlife corridor, protection of cultural sites, maintenance of scenic landscapes and grazing.

The other rivers selected for heritage river classification are the Wimmera, Glenelg, Aire, Lerderderg, Thomson, Aberfeldy, Mitchell, Snowy, Upper Buchan, Suggan-Buggan, Bemm, Genoa, Ovens, Big, Howqua, Goulburn and Mitta Mitta.

All the heritage rivers and natural catchments classified under the Act are on public land.

"While the land tenure of these areas will not change, the Heritage Rivers Act will ensure that all activities are managed to protect the identified values of the river corridors and catchments," Mr Stone said.

Source: Herald-Sun, 22nd December 1997



## Success

Early in January FOWSP received news that we had been successful in our application for a grant of \$1,722.00 from the Parks Victoria Community Grants Program.

The funding we received is for materials to construct a rabbit proof fence around an orchid 'hot spot' at Timber Reserve where the Park's largest population of the Wine-lipped Spider-orchid (*Caladenia lindleyana*) has recently been rediscovered.



We were informed of our successful application in a letter from the Minister for Conservation and Land Management, the Hon. Marie Tehan. From a total of 651 applications submitted across Victoria 212 were selected for funding. Once again we were among the lucky recipients.

## Mount Lofty Plans

Plans for the management of Mt Lofty, Warrandyte State Park's latest addition, were discussed at a meeting in mid-January. Representatives from FOWSP, as well as Bend of Islands Conservation Association (BICA), Kirinari Kayak Club and Friends of Mount Lofty attended the meeting.

Phil Pegler from Parks Victoria's Planning and Development Division, together with Andy Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge WSP, outlined the masterplan and invited comments from the community representatives.

In brief, the plan is as follows:

The public focal point for Mt Lofty and main entry into the reserve will be from Wittons Reserve, currently owned by Manningham City Council. These plans will involve integrated management between the Council and Parks Victoria. The car park will be upgraded and additional facilities such as toilets and barbeques

will be provided, access to Mt Lofty will be across a bridge over Brushy Creek. This takes pressure of the more environmentally sensitive area at the end of Lower Homestead Rd which will remain low-key with minor upgrades to enable canoe and kayak drop off and parking and possible improvement of the launching ramp.

Revegetation is a major priority. Parks Victoria has already declared its commitment to conservation and Mount Lofty has high conservation values not only for flora and fauna, but also for its geological features and its Aboriginal history. Wurunjeri descendants will be invited to have their say in the management of the area.

Issues such as rope swings, erosion, litter, emergency access and signage will also be addressed in the management plan.

If anyone would like further information on the meeting or have any concerns or suggestions on the future management of Mt Lofty they can either ring Andy Nixon (9844 2659), Mike Coupar (9844 1650) or Flora Anderson (9722 1776)

## Sunday Family Activity - Willow Attack

**Date:** Sunday February 22nd

**Place:** WSP depot. Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melways ref. map 23 C10)

**Time:** 1.00pm - 4.00pm

It's time to continue our attack on the willows again. Come prepared to get wet. Bring mattocks for digging out yellow iris. Bring a plate for afternoon tea at the Folly.



# "I SPY"

by B.G

## Market Matters

FOWSP stall helpers at the December '97 Market were Diane Baird, Peter Sharp, Jan Giles, Katherine Byrne and Marion Kiewiet. As usual Neal Tessier 'mantled' the stall structure, Ross Coupar and Richard Barnes dismantled and packed it away after the market finished. Thanks to all.

## Snake Scene

A tiger snake has taken up residence around Frogland. Keep to the wooden walkway!

## Tooth Teacher

Mid-January '98 Colin Bromley (Construction and Maintenance) was seen teaching a group of four summer fire-crew how to carry out chain-saw tooth maintenance.

## Wrigglers 'Wremoved'

Forty wrigglers were sieved from the tank water used to fill the hot water urn in the 'Folly'.

## Blatant Breaches

Two rangers booked a small group of people for blatant breaches of Park Regulations involving dogs and bicycles. About \$240 fines in total.

## Warrandyte Water

Anna Richtarik has just completed a series of maps detailing all water points around the Warrandyte area (for fire-fighting purposes).

## Fire Facts

- Colin Bromley and Stan Naffiokas have been to Lithgow, N.S.W., fighting fires as part of an interstate effort.
- Anna Richtarik and Justin Welander returned from N.S.W., having taken up needed fire-fighting equipment.
- All the fire-crew from Warrandyte State Park went to the ALPINE NATIONAL PARK fires north of Licola (Victoria), except for one who nearly cut her finger through when sharpening an axe at the Depot.

## Politician's Preferences

Hon. Wendy Smith M.P. (Member for Silvan Province) writes that the native flower she likes (most?) is the *Thelymitra media* - Tall Sun-Orchid. Watch this column for more Politician's Preferences.

## 'Interpretations' Interrogated

Why would the scope of Ranger's Interpretation activities be removed, curtailed, reduced and to what purpose?

## Project Fire-Fighters

These are the people previously referred to as 'summer fire-crew'. They are DNRE staff not WSP staff. Currently at Warrandyte we have Justin Welander, Anna Richtarik, Stan Naffiokas, Tim Pulleyblank, Adam Howard and Scott McLeod.

## Mystery Plants

Does anyone know who left four polystyrene boxes of plants outside the large polyhouse at the nursery just before Christmas? Unfortunately they were placed in an area that does not receive watering and were mostly dead by the time they were found. Among the plants were a box of *Gahnia sieberiana* (Red-fruit Saw-sedge) which does not occur in the Park. A tray of *Pandorea pandorana* (Wonga Vine) and several other plants in pots labelled 'Warrandyte stock' also appeared in the small polyhouse.

In other nursery news the small fence between the outside of the hardening off area and the lower car park has been put up (thanks Col). This

now protects a variety of rare bog-loving ground covers we have planted in this site to take advantage of the run off from the nursery.

A rabbit was cornered and caught in the old hardening off area (thanks guys), fortunately little damage has been done.

'Don's Bath' has been emptied, cleaned, refilled and replanted - the excess aquatics are now in Frogland's latest pond (thanks J.R.).

We still have plenty of work to do around the nursery and if the autumn rains come as predicted there could be quite a demand for plants. Even if you can only spare an hour or less on a Thursday morning it would great to see you. Free plants are still available.



# Plant of the Month

by Joan MacMahon

**Y**es I know the title is boring but I expended all my energy on the article and had none left over for a nifty title. (I hope something more picturesque surfaces before Pat and I paste up the March edition.)

I was inspired to put pen to paper by a short-cut I made in late January along Gold Memorial Road. It follows close to the course of Anderson's Creek where it runs between Harris Gully Road and Hussey's Lane. (Melway map 35) For those who don't know it this is the most picturesque drive in Warrandyte - great views of the creek-side vegetation and the heights of 4th Hill which inspire a sense of remoteness from all things man-made.

My enjoyment was enhanced by the contrast between this beautiful place and the suburbs where I'd spent a busy day chasing what I hoped was the last of my boys' school requirements.

And the Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*)! The creek-side was thick with it.. so much so it was as if I was travelling beside a lush creamy-white wall.

If you can get hold of some of these plants do try them. They are interesting garden subjects as well as excellent habitat for insects and small birds. As well, they flower at a time most other local plants have finished.

Depending on the moistness of the site they vary from dwarfed shrubs to smallish trees. The greater the moisture the more prolific the growth. However don't be tempted to plant in a boggy area, they won't cope at all well. Although relatively slow to put on height they are pleasingly dependable and long-lived. Best not plant them by your front door as they come armed with some serious prickles. As well as the showy flower clusters which form at the branch tips they have intriguing fruit: shaped like a tiny purse (*bursa* is

Latin for purse or satchel), each has a central, vertical division. Each side holds one or a few seeds and as they ripen and the purse dries out the top splits and releases the seed. If you're planning to collect you need to be observant as certain tiny insects can quickly make a meal of the ripe seed.

We don't have this plant to ourselves as it's widespread and fairly common over most of Victoria and also naturally occurs in Tasmania (known there as Christmas Tree), N.S.W. (Blackthorn), S.A. (Native Box) and Q.L.D. It's aboriginal names included *Kurwan* and *Tupy*. I wonder whether Koorie people made use of this plant or simply enjoyed its beauty?

It has a close relative in Victoria which differs in having a very hairy leaf under-surface and goes by the name *B. lasiophylla* - it doesn't have a common name and it's not found in the Melbourne area. Further afield it apparently has about four slightly more distant relatives. Several are found in Queensland and *B. longisepala* occurs in New South Wales. This last sounds very similar to 'our' bursaria, the main difference being that the flowers grow as small clusters among the leaves.

No bursaria has been bold enough to venture overseas so the genus is described as endemic to Australia.

Not so some other members of the family to which bursaria belongs. They extend to New Guinea, Malaysia and even a large portion of Africa. The family name? It's Pittosporaceae and includes an interesting range of genera; including *Billardiera*, of which we have *Billardiera scandens* (Common Apple-berry) occurring locally, *Sollya*, *Cheiranthra*, *Hymenosporum* and *Pittosporum*. This last genus includes the very troublesome weed, *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum). This plant is one the lovers of Warrandyte's bush 'love to hate'. So much so, some of them spend considerable amounts of their 'leisure' time eradicating it. Isn't it ironic that Sweet Bursaria is forced to compete for space with it's not so distant relative?

## A FRIEND IN NEED

Due to unforeseen circumstances I have to leave the house at Pound Bend and look for another roof over my head, hopefully in a similar environment. If any of our members know of a small cottage in the district that is available for rent I would be pleased if they would let me know. I would love to stay in the Warrandyte or surrounding area.

Thank you.....Ron Taylor  
9844 4285



# Worth Repeating

## Spice of variety is on a decline

By Steve Malcolm

Biodiversity is a term that is becoming more widely used and understood as public concern grows over the extinction of species and destruction of ecosystems.

Biodiversity, the amount of variety among Earth's living things, is rapidly declining as a result of human influences.

Preserving our world's remaining biodiversity has become a major objective of national and international environment policies.

A serious challenge is the tendency for decision makers and others to under-estimate the complexity of ecosystems and overestimate human capacities to fully understand them and be able to "fix things up" if something goes wrong, as it often does.

Even a small ecosystem can have an almost incomprehensible number of components and interrelationships between its components.

At present, many people have little comprehension of the true diversity of ecosystems, nor of the complexity of the processes which determine the survival of the living things within them.

An extreme example of this is seen in the former US President Ronald Reagan's statement: "A tree's a tree. How many more do you want to look at? If you've seen one tree you've seen them all."

Television documentaries, videos, books and, very importantly, direct experience, can all contribute to a more realistic perspective on this issue.

Environment Australia has produced a spectacular poster, suitable for home, school or office, to help convey the scale and beauty of the biodiversity within Australia.

It has color photographs of almost 300 different habitats superimposed on a large map of Australia.

*Source: The Age 20/11/97*



El Nino continues to make life difficult for our local wildlife. The lack of rain and hence infiltration of water into the ground means that leaves and

branches are lacking moisture. Many Ringtail and Brushtail Possums are suffering from such severe dehydration that, particularly when carrying young, they are literally falling out of their homes and are too weak to elude cats.

Koalas are also having a drought-related struggle. For some their usual leaf-only diet isn't sufficient and Julie finds they welcome a spray

from a hose. It must not be a fine spray as this has been linked with respiratory infection. A spray which mimics rain is perfect. It is best not to provide water in a bowl as Koalas weren't 'designed' for sipping with head forward - their noses get in the way!

For your interest here is a list of all the animals Julie has been involved with from 29 September 1997 to 4 February 1998: 3 Little Wattlebirds, 3 Eastern Rosellas, 2 Crimson Rosellas, 2 Kookaburras, 1 Galah, 1 Rainbow Lorikeet, 2 Swallows (babies), 1 Magpie, 1 Tawny Frogmouth, 1 Treecreeper, 1 Wombat, 6 Koalas, 1 Sugar Glider, 1 Swamp Wallaby and 1 Echidna. Each of these animals represents a concerned member of our community. It's good to know there are so many concerned folk.

Did you know that both local vets will treat wildlife for free?



## *What's David Farrar (Frankie) working on?*

### Reserves

Well, at the moment, I am trying to finish off a status report on 9 Crownland reserves that are currently managed from the Warrandyte's park office, and I should have this finished by the end of February.

The report identifies the reserve's land status, who is the managing agency, and what future management actions will be required to protect the different reserves managed by Parks Victoria.

### Fire Management

Fuel Reduction burns this time of year, I think not! Although I am doing some preparation work on what we should be burning when the weather conditions are more suitable.

Autumn will be the month when the weather conditions are in line with burn plans and the temperature, relative humidity, windspeed and fuel moisture fit into burn prescriptions. When the weather conditions are right for staff, fuel reduction and ecological burns can be implemented.

Possible burn sites in '98 are;

- St Andrews Bushland Reserve 25ha

### Warrandyte State Park

- Yarra Brae 10-20 ha
- Whipstick Gully 1ha
- Hochkins Ridge Bushland Reserve 2ha
- Eltham Copper Butterfly Reserve 1ha

### Fauna Management

I am currently investigating monitoring and surveys for wildlife in the park, with Kangaroos and Koalas being first. At this stage I need to assess numbers in the park and then ask many questions of the populations.

All questioning about both species would be related to ecological health and sustainability of the park and the species itself.

I would also like to look at the health of other species in the park with the priority listed species ie Tuan (*Brush-tailed phascogale*) would be one species I have an interest in.

This is very brief information I know, and I expect to have more detailed information soon.

Friend's group members with a specific interest in fauna, feel free to call me about any issue, and I would be more than happy to have your help on the future management of any species.

Happy Days!



From Andy Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge

### To add to Frankie's greetings.....

**Rabbits.** And yes there are lots of them, but hopefully not for long.

Glen Jameson, as introduced in the December '97 edition of FOWSP's newsletter, is working close to full time on the new rabbit control program at the park. His work has included over the past few months - rabbit harbor mapping, transect counts, site eradication identification, and project briefs for contractors. A rabbit control 'Landcare' type group has been set up in the Webb St. area of Fourth Hill with residents chaffing at the bit to "get the bunnies".

Glen has identified high priority control sites at Pound Bend, Yarra Brae and Stane Brae. The

Pound site holds exciting potential with interest and assistance being shown by those resident in the area. We hope to block all rabbit movement at the neck and then work diligently via harbour removal, fencing, poisoning and even ferreting, to reduce the population. We are obtaining quotes from contractors at the moment. Once supplied, of we go !

**Switching locations to Mt. Lofty now.** A recent consultative forum was held on this issue for invited community interest groups, namely FOWSP, Bend of Islands Conservation Association, and Kirinari Kayak Klub. Many valuable contributions were received and some thought provoking discussion had.





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**Artwork by Ant Owen**