

May 1998

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Rabbit Busters Hit WSP

By Pat Coupar

You may or may not have noticed a number of wire mesh fences going up around Pound Bend. They are part of a 'Rabbit Busters Program' - a federal initiative by the National Heritage Trust (the Telstra sell off). The \$30,000 funding for this project in Warrandyte has come jointly from the Rabbit Busters and Good Neighbours programs.

Under the leadership of Ranger Glen Jameson, the aim is to eradicate all the rabbits from designated areas of the Park. Long-term Fowspians will remember Glen as a past FOWSP coordinator when he did much to raise the profile of the group in the early eighties.



Glen has been working as a Ranger at the Yarra Valley Metropolitan Park for the past 8 years and brings with him a wealth of experience in

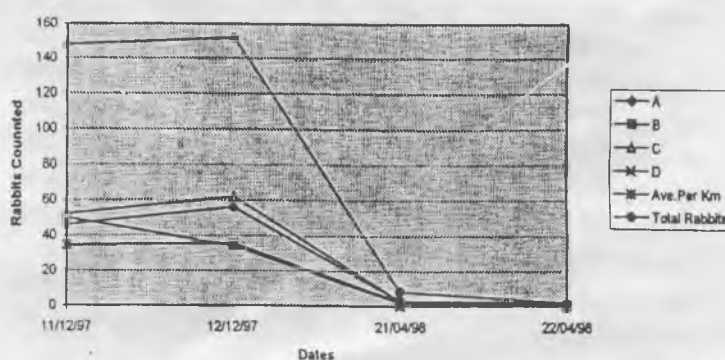
rabbit control and revegetation of degraded areas. Glen was keen to choose areas of Warrandyte where previous rabbit control works have been carried out. These include fences at the 25 acre paddock and Market Garden at Yarra Brae, a fenced riparian strip at Stane Brae and the highest public profile area of them all - Pound Bend. By fencing across the neck of the Pound and then fencing and eradicating rabbits from segments at a time, Glen hopes to remove all rabbits from Pound Bend. Pindone-laced carrots are used as baits to poison rabbits inside and outside the fences. Results so far have been impressive with only small residual populations remaining. These will be removed before new populations can become established.

While still in the planning process, Glen hopes to revegetate these rabbit-free areas by direct seeding following a weed control spraying regime - a technique that he has used successfully at Yarra Valley Park.

Whatever happened to the great biological control - the calicivirus? While it has proved a success in dry regions of the State like the mallee, and Interstate in the Flinders Ranges, it has been shown to be unsuitable for places like Warrandyte. Numbers did drop following release of the virus and in some areas, for example Mt Lofty, relatively low numbers have been maintained without any additional work. However,, many rabbits are now becoming immune to the virus.

It seems unlikely that the calicivirus will be released again at Warrandyte, at least in the near future. At the present time the 'Rabbit Busters Program' is looking a better proposition for reliable rabbit control with the added bonus of providing corridors of revegetation for our native wildlife.

Rabbit Transect - Pound Bend





Green Wedge Seminars



The Powerful Owl - talk by Alan Webster

Report Sharon Mason

Alan, who works with Flora and fauna Guarantee, began his talk by telling us that the Powerful Owl is Australia's largest owl. Although considered rare in Australia, observations have revealed six to seven breeding pairs in the Yarra Valley including a breeding pair in the Warrandyte area (sightings at Bradley's Lane, Pound Bend and Jumping Ck).

Since Powerful Owls are big birds (up to 65 cm tail to head) they need very large hollows in which to nest. Ringtail Possums are their major item of prey, however, Brushtail Possums and Sugar Gliders are also taken. The whole prey item is eaten including fur, feathers and bones. Pellets containing fragments of bone, fur and feathers are regurgitated. Many hundreds of these have been analysed to determine the owl's diet. During summer, the owls will also eat invertebrates such as beetles.

Over June and July female Powerful Owls incubate their eggs, while the males roost near by bringing prey to the nest. The young do not become independent until the following February

or March when they move away from the territory. Just where these dispersing birds go is unknown.

Among Alan's excellent slides was one that showed the immature owls roosting near their parents just next to a house with a dog lying around the backyard. I was very jealous and am waiting for them to sit outside my lounge room window!

The talk was very well-attended and it was great to learn more about a rare bird that lives and breeds right here in Warrandyte.

Post Script. During the talk Alan relayed the following sad story.

During the construction of a certain boardwalk, Powerful Owls were noticed nesting close by. The owls showed signs of stress - the male dropped items of prey instead of retaining them to eat later when it was dark. The boardwalk was closed due to the presence of the owls, however, some people still continued to use it. Pellets were found containing Powerful Owl feathers and bones. It seems that although prey was available, the adults which had become too stressed to continue rearing their young, had eaten their own chicks.

A sad reminder of the unseen damage humans can cause without even realising.



Fungi - talk by Bruce Fuhrer

Report Pat Coupar

If you didn't make it to Bruce Fuhrer's Green Wedge talk then you missed a real treat. Bruce, a renowned fungi guru, gave an informative talk sprinkled with humour and accompanied by his own stunningly beautiful slides.

From the outset Bruce explained that he would be concentrating on the fungi of Warrandyte where, over the years, he has recorded a total of 480 species. In his introduction he described the three major groups of fungi: mycorrhizal - those that form a partnership with roots to assist in the uptake of nutrients; saprophytes - those that break down logs and leaf litter thereby recycling nutrients, and the pathogens - those that cause disease usually in weak or damaged trees.

Many of Bruce's slides were taken at Jumping Ck Reserve where he has done most of his study in

the local area. We were shown a variety of gilled fungi, bracket fungi, puff balls and many more. Quite a number of the species had not been recorded elsewhere in Victoria or indeed in Australia - more a reflection on how poorly fungi have been studied in this country rather than the exceptional nature of Jumping Creek. Nevertheless, Bruce emphasised Warrandyte is still a remarkable place for fungi.

During the talk Bruce made the point that fungi are indicators of the health of the environment and in Europe, due to pollution, many species are becoming extinct. He was reticent, however, when asked if the same thing was happening here. When pressed he did say that some species had declined over 15 years in places like Kinglake and Warrandyte, but added that climatic factors could not be discounted.

One thing is certain though, Bruce will continue to study fungi at Jumping Creek and as a result Warrandyte will have the most comprehensive fungi list of any State Park.

Windy Peak

Mt Lofty Sunday Family Activity

Report Pat Coupar

Horizontal bands of rain moved across the landscape as the forces of nature had their way. It was a dramatic sight, but too uncomfortable to stand watching for long on the windy peak of Mt Lofty.

Within minutes the rain had passed and a glimmer of weak sun forced its way through the clouds. That was the pattern of the day and it did not deter around fifteen Fowspians who had come to discover Mt Lofty. For some it was their first visit to this huge hilly tongue of land that only last year was incorporated in Warrandyte State Park.

Ranger David Van Bockel led the walk which commenced at the Homestead Rd wetland - now completely dry. Along the way David pointed out the striking contrasts of the vegetation as the river twists and turns - steep, rocky, burlap-clad cliffs on the inside bends opposite weedy alluvial

flats on the broad sweeping outside bends. The narrow riparian strip sustains a variety of plants generally confined to riverbanks - River Lomatia (*Lomatia myricoides*), Swamp Paperbark

(*Melaleuca ericifolia*), Woolly Tea-tree (*Leptospermum lanigerum*), River Bottlebrush (*Callistemon sieberi*) and Muttonwood (*Rapanea howittiana*).



With a well-organised car shuffle, we made it back to Wittons Reserve. Just downstream from where Brushy Creek enters the Yarra River, we set up the barbecue and gathered around the welcome heat of the fire. Food was plentiful and there were free plants available to all who came.

FOWSP greatly appreciated David taking time to organise and lead the walk while still officially on secondment at Woori Yallock.

Good news for Anderson's Creek and its tributaries

Joan MacMahon

A meeting I attended as FOWSP representative on a very hot day in February left me feeling in a hopeful mood.

Melbourne Water has, with the assistance of two consulting companies (ID&A River and Catchment Management and Eco Science) had Anderson's Creek under the microscope. The outcome of all this activity is to be the production of The Andersons Creek Waterway Activity Plan. All sorts of parameters have been measured and having no experience in the field of hydrology I found much of the terminology unfamiliar. That didn't stop me having a very interesting afternoon. (I asked a lot of questions!)

I learnt that Anderson's Creek has two main tributaries. These are Harris Gully Creek which has its confluence with Anderson's Creek at the rear of the Warrandyte C.F.A. station (our meeting place) and Anderson's Creek East Branch which has its confluence at the Warrandyte-Ringwood Rd. in Ringwood North. The total length of this waterway is 13.5 km.

Wayne Tennant from ID&A presented information available to date - there's a lot! - using a series of large maps on which were noted areas of concern.

Some of the issues raised and terms used were; recreation, culvert capacity, flooding, infrastructure damage (eg Warrandyte Bridge), platypus, livestock access from private land, choking with cumbungi, key habitat areas, key sediment stores, tree planting, riffle and pool sequences, table drains, silting due to road run-off, water quality (turbidity, nutrients, heavy metal pollution, litter), rubbish dumping including weeds, stream stability, excess algal growth, stream stability, channel roughness, migrational opportunities, weeds and vermin, geomorphic processes, fire management issues, rock beach walls, erosion heads, pavement upgrade, flood plain floor, high ph, management units and damage to public assets. That's not the full list!

There was much discussion as to how this waterway system might be brought back to a state closer to natural and what role the groups present might play in the process. I have to confess that until I reread my notes a few days ago I'd forgotten my promise to let Roger Lord, one of the Melbourne Water representatives, know, in writing, what contribution (if any) we would be able to make. I'll make sure we discuss it at tonight's committee meeting.



by B.G

April Activities

Thanks to Richard and Ann Barnes and Anne Warren for their two hour stint at the April Market Stall, others for a regular hour were Betty Oke, Ben Gotlib and Neil Doran.

S.W.R. again!

Margaret Humphreys (Admin. Officer) is listed as being responsible for Reception, General Office Duties, Purchase Orders and Petty Cash, Recreation Leave and Fire Resource Management Systems.

Colin Bromley's (Construction and Maintenance Crew - what is the singular of crew?) responsibilities are Tanker Driver and General Park Maintenance.

Some Staff Stop!

Some Project Fire Fighters were let go at the Park before Easter, Stan Nassiokas and Adam Howard included. Tim Pulleyblank, Scott McLeod and Anna Richtarik returned to university studies at about the same time. Justin Welander is with us 'till June.

Ex-speaker Speaks Out

The Hon Bob Halveson O.B.E. MP (Member for Casey) has responded in a note to inform I SPY that he selects the Narrow-leafed Peppermint as his favourite indigenous plant.

Fern Friends

One of our urbanite member would like two or three small plants of the local Common Bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*) for use in a tightly controlled fern garden. After the laughter and incredulity has subsided, if you can help please phone 9876 2348.

Theme trend?

Jeff Floyd - Chief Executive of Parks Victoria is moving to a new role - in TOURISM VICTORIA.

Ranger Rang(e)ing

Steven Anderson (Ranger, Kinglake) and Angie have left on a six month anti-clockwise tour of Australia. Does this mean they'll return on November 1997?

"Barnacle Bill"

Why is Neil Tessier desperately seeking the words of the song "Barnacle Bill the Sailor". Can anyone help?

Playing Field

A new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement for Parks Victoria is "designed to bring all employees on to the same level playing field...\$350,000 per annum performance pool, core generic competencies, career enhancement.....a 'no' vote would be divisive (on May 7th)."

Gary Mead - Management Organisation Development - Kew, was the recent well attended One Year Celebration of Parks Victoria a swan-song for some staff?

Post Script Stop Press

"We trained very hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form into teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by re-organising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation.".....Gaius Petronius, A.D. 66.

At last, we've started one

Joan MacMahon

A good idea, so why didn't we do this years ago? Well.....we've always known it was a good idea, but, gee, there's always been more urgent activities to occupy us. Now that we do have one our environmental credentials have shot up into the quadruple A class. Drool, Jeff, drool.

Where is it?.....Next to the potting mix bay.

What is it?.....If you think you know, send your answer to PO box 220 Warrandyte.

Neatest correct entry (handwritten) wins the end product of the ancient process we've set in train.

When will this rare prize be available for collection? This depends on the mix of temperature and precipitation over the next few months, as well as the number of folk who find the time to do some aerating activities on 'it'.

Worth Repeating

El Nino Takes a New Twist

By Geoff Strong Environment Reporter

Climate scientists and meteorologists are divided over whether the devastating El Nino weather phenomenon is about to break or lock in for the rest of the year.

The reason? Two key El Nino indicators are in conflict. The Southern Oscillation index, the difference in atmospheric pressure between Darwin and Tahiti, is now reading minus-29 points, higher than any time for the past year. This indicates the phenomenon will continue.

But the sea temperatures off the coast of South America have begun to cool, meaning the upwelling of cold Antarctic water has returned; a sign the phenomenon is ending.

A meeting in Melbourne yesterday of about 30 weather and agriculture experts from around Australia was unable to reach a conclusion about which way El Nino is likely to go. March-April is a crucial time in its cycle. During these months, it either begins or ends. If it fails to wind down, it could continue until early next year. Some past events have gone on for four years.

A continuation could be disastrous for agriculture and Australia's balance of payments. The present El Nino has been focused on Victoria and New South Wales.

Overseas it has led to a crippling drought in Papua New Guinea and exacerbated fires in Indonesia, while floods have devastated parts of North and South America.

The Australian Bureau of Resource Economics calculates that in Victoria El Nino reduced the most recent grain harvest by about 15 per cent, while the number of farmers deserting their industry increased 50 per cent.

A spokesman for the Victorian Farmers Federation, Mr Clay Manners, said a continuation of El Nino "was too horrible to contemplate".

He said industries reliant on irrigation, such as dairying, fruit and grape growing, would be hardest hit because irrigation lakes such as Lake Eildon were extremely low.

This week climatologists at the Bureau of Meteorology had been cautiously predicting that the sea-temperature change and satellite information, El Nino was likely to break up.

After yesterday's meeting, one scientist, Dr Rob Allen from the CSIRO's division of atmospheric research, said that while El Nino was showing some signs of ending, he believed it could still go either way.

Source: *The Age* 3.4.98



This wonderful cartoon, drawn to accompany this article from *The Age* has come from FOWSP's own illustrator and cartoonist Richard Thiel.

If any members would like a picture or cartoon to go with an article they have written or can think of a suitable topic for a cartoon, just contact the editors.

Questionnaire - Your Say

About 15% of members responded to the questionnaire that we sent out last year. The committee would like to thank those people for taking the time to do so. The results were interesting and we certainly received enough answers to give us an idea of what members enjoy and what changes they would like to see. In particular it was apparent that Ranger presence is very important at Sunday activities. The committee immediately acted on this information and Ranger-in Charge, Andy Nixon has initiated five Ranger led Sunday activities for the year. While on the subject of Sundays, the majority of members who replied thought that once a month was too often to hold an activity. With this in mind we have decided to reduce the activities to every other month. The most preferred activity was a walk, but planting and propagation were also popular.

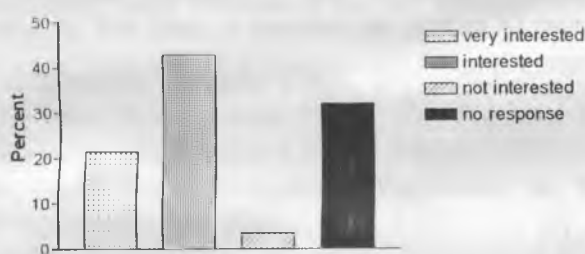
Onto the newsletter. The 'Front Page' was by far the most popular item and the editors will endeavour to continue to find topical items to fit this slot. The 'Rangers report' also rated highly as did 'Worth Repeating'.

It was obvious from reading the comments that most people would like to attend more activities if they were not working (Thursdays) or if they had more time (Sundays). What the questionnaire did show was that it is important to offer a wide range of activities (including market and festival) thereby giving members an opportunity, if they wish, to become involved.

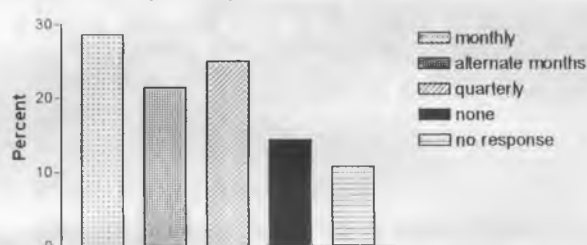
Most preferred features of Newsletter

Feature	Very interested %	Interested %	Not interested %	No response %
Front page	54	29	0	14
Rangers report	50	29	0	18
Forthcoming events	50	25	4	18
Thursday program	46	21	4	25
Rescue	43	43	4	14
Worth repeating	43	36	0	18
Activities report	43	27	4	21
I Spy	32	36	4	25
Book review	25	46	4	21
Weather	25	39	7	25
Puzzle page	14	21	32	27

Sunday family day



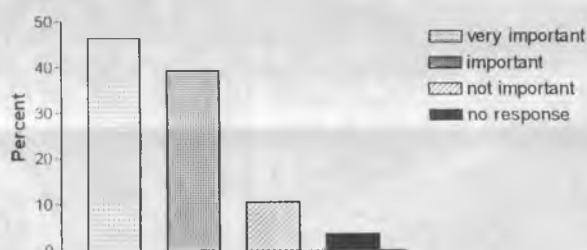
Sunday activity - how often?



Sunday activity - when?



Ranger present at Sunday activity



Most enjoyed FOWSP activities

Activity	very interested %	interested %	not interested %	no response %
Newsletter	71	11	4	14
Nursery	43	29	0	29
Thursday program	39	25	4	32
Festival	36	18	21	25
Talks & workshops	29	39	7	25
Other enviro groups	29	29	11	25
Social bbq	21	32	21	25
Market stall	18	29	29	25

Most preferred Thursday activities

Activity	Very interested %	interested %	not interested %	no response %
Walks	46	7	14	39
Propagation	39	11	14	43
Planting	18	32	4	43
Weeding	18	21	18	39
Other activities	14	32	7	43

Significant Sites Tour

Joan MacMahon

April 16th: Two carloads of Fowspians seen leaving the Depot at great speed after lunches had been hastily despatched. Wheels spinning, gravel flying, hands grabbing hold of roof grips, much chattering amid cries of 'Put ya foot down Pat!'. What could have excited our interest? Could it be the long-awaited tour of sites of significance in Jumping Creek Reserve? Luckily for Pat and Cathy's demerit points scores, Sgt. Walker and his team were safely out of view chewing on their respective lunches as we sped past Forbes St.

If you weren't on this flying adventure you'll just have to take my word for it being all about **botanical** significance. Mind you, if I were you, I wouldn't believe a word of this. Leg-pulling is my fourth favourite

activity. (Believe me!)

After slowing down a smidgin, to unlock the gate beyond which ordinary folk must walk, we continued our low flying along the ridge to Blue Tongue Bend. It was here that a **significant** change came over the party. Conversation swiftly altered from km per hour and associated dust production to a language foreign to ordinary mortals. Here's a sample of what you might have heard if you'd dared lurk in the vicinity of this oddly behaved group of people as, sometimes looking up, sometimes looking down, rarely looking where they were heading, grammar and punctuation dispensed with: "pomaderris elliptica, warramate hills, fire, burgan, seedlings, cuttings, isolated, remnant, record, arthur williamson, burgan bend, sandy soil, fence, olearia argophylla disappearii (new species), old tape, maroon hood leaves, goodenia elongata, swamp gum gully, carex iynx, wallaby, sweet vernal, ottelia, cumbungi, beautiful view, memorial, colin, kangaroos, time to go home."

Wednesday Opportunity

If you should be free on the first Wednesday of the month, you might like to give **Friends of the Koornong** a hand. The Koornong is a lovely spot bordering the Yarra. It's opposite Jumping Creek Reserve, not far from Blue Tongue Bend. It's the largest block of our park on the north side of the river and much invaded by weeds. So, if you feel like helping with some bush restoration, come along, you'll be very welcome. (9-11am. Phone Cathy Willis 98441841 for the activity location. Next few meetings are June 3rd, July 1st, August 5th.

Coming Soon

National Parks of East Gippsland

BBQ followed by a slide show
spectacular

When: Friday July 31st at The Folly

Time: 6.00pm onwards

Wanted Free Firewood

If anyone has any excess wood they would like to get rid of - trees they have cut down, prunings etc (native or exotic), please contact Ant Owen on 9844 1344. He will collect.

Soup Roster

The Thursday lunchtime soup roster is about to begin again. Regulars are requested to put their name on the list which will be pinned up on the Folly noticeboard.



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