

October 1998

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Burgan - a Burning Issue

By Pat Coupar

Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*), sometimes colloquially called tea-tree, is a plant well-adapted to disturbance and fire. And, at one time or another, most of Warrandyte's bushland has either been cleared or burnt. While this is not a unique scenario, it seems that in Warrandyte something has gone wrong to tip the balance of Burgan out of control.

Burgan is a shrub or small tree belonging to the Family Myrtaceae - the same family as eucalypts, bottlebrushes, paperbarks and, of course, tea-trees. In early summer it puts on a stunning, albeit brief, display of white five-petalled flowers. The plant's dense foliage provides shelter and habitat for a number of birds, and ring-tail possums often make their ball-shaped nests amongst its branches. In Warrandyte however, these positives, are grossly outweighed by the negatives. One of these is Burgan's habit of growing in dense, almost impenetrable thickets which occlude light and under which little else grows. In some areas it forms a mid-storey monoculture where the soft carpet of fallen leaves inhibits the growth of most ground cover plants.

From observations made at Yarra Brae and parts of Jumping Creek Reserve and Black Flat, it appears there could be a link between Burgan, bellbirds and eucalypt dieback. The bellbirds, which selectively feed on lerps - the sugary coating of psyllids - use the Burgan thickets for shelter, aggressively chasing away other insect-feeding birds that would usually consume the psyllids which are damaging the eucalypts.

It's possible that rabbits may also be a contributing factor to Burgan's undisputed success. A rabbit exclusion fence on the northern

slopes of Warrandyte State Park's Koornong Reserve provides a good illustration of the effects of selective grazing. Outside the fence the diversity of the understorey is poor - Burgan dominates. Inside the fence, erected two years ago, a variety of wattles, peas, heaths and other shrubs, plus a plethora of wildflowers and grasses grow in harmony. Could it be that the rabbits' preference and continual grazing of these other shrubs and herbs outside the fence has allowed the Burgan to proliferate over the years. Do rabbits in fact feed on Burgan at all? The construction of the fence has allowed the real diversity of vegetation to regain its rightful place. It is one of the best examples in the Park showing the value of rabbit exclusion.

The problem of Burgan in Warrandyte State Park has been brought to recent attention following the release of the Mount Lofty concept plan which suggests low density planting of the species as part of a revegetation plan. This issue has been discussed at length by the Flora Management Team.

While delving into literature on the subject, a Ph.D thesis was unearthed. It was undertaken at Melbourne University by Terry S Judd, who continued overleaf



Burgan - a Burning Issue continued

studied the ecology and water relations of three invasive shrubs, one of which was Burgan. The study confirms that following fire, Burgan regenerates prolifically from seed stored in the soil and coppices vigorously from lignotubers. However, it found that absence of fire over a prolonged period may also favour the species while causing the decline of short-lived fire-dependant species such as some wattles and peas.

The bottom line, according to Terry Judd, is "That the problem of managing *Kunzea ericoides* invaded communities is yet to be resolved."

Further to the conundrum, some botanists have thrown a spanner in the works by suggesting that the aggressive, invasive form of Burgan might be an introduction from New Zealand. If that is the case then Warrandyte State Park could be facing its worst weed yet.

Black Flat to Stane Brae

By Alison Thom

What better way to spend a Sunday morning than to walk through the bush, following

the river upstream, on a beautiful early spring morning with like-minded people.

A small group met at Black Flat car park at 10 o'clock and a car shuffle was arranged, some cars being left at Stane Brae.

We set off under the leadership of ranger David Farrar. The narrow winding path led up and down the hillside, through Red Box and Burgan. The ground cover consisted of various grasses and sedges. Not many plants were in flower, but we saw Correa, Early Nancy, Sundew, Hovea, Dusty Miller and greenhood orchids.



watch us as we watched them.

Hunger pangs were becoming evident so we plodded up the final stretch to see the sausages sizzling and the billy boiling. David, Pat, Cathy and Jenny did a good job providing a delicious lunch - we ate the lot!

The track continued until we reached the area leading to Stane Brae where the terrain changed to rolling green hills dotted with eucalypts and wattles. We sat down here to watch the kangaroos bounding away, then stopping to

Congratulations

Congratulations to the North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare group and other local communities who have been successful in obtaining a grant from the Natural Heritage Trust for major environmental restoration.

Senator Robert Hill, Federal Minister for the Environment, visited North Warrandyte on September 14th to meet with representatives from various environmental organisations.

The grant of \$193,000 over three years will be provided to conserve and rehabilitate remnant vegetation from Warrandyte State Park to Kinglake National Park along Watson's Creek. The project involves revegetating an area of over 40 hectares by planting 63,000 trees, reducing weed species and constructing over 12 kilometres of fencing to protect vegetation and habitats. Senator Hill said "Local community participation will lead to an enhancement of floral diversity and an increase in habitat viability."



Rangers Report

The draft concept plan for Mt. Lofty was tabled for comment at a public consultative forum on July 16th. The consultation process was very successful with wide representation from a variety of interest groups and local government. There are considered to be no major issues which would cause problems in initiating the first stage of the plan this year (1998/99). And further, with the assistance of FOWSP members, the parks flora management team has resolved not to make use of *Burgan* as a major revegetation species.

The 'Rabbit Busters' program for 1997/98 is now concluded. But the work does continue. Glen Jameson's strategy to work with the residents of a local street adjacent to the park re. rabbit proof fencing is proving successful. And some follow up work in destruction of rabbit habitat in various locations is to be undertaken by Justin Welander (park staff) in the next few weeks. Justin who has been with Warrandyte State Park pretty much full time for the last two years is technically finishing his employ this Friday the 2nd of October. He will be back on contract for 3 weeks undertaking the rabbit work and then hopefully back in early November as leading hand for the summer fire crew. Thanks for all your hard work Justin and your patience with our capricious employment systems.

A further serious incursion into one of the Eltham Copper Butterfly (ECB) reserves has taken place. Considerable damage occurred to native vegetation, particularly the host plant to the butterfly, *Bursaria spinosa*. Clean up of the site has taken place and short term actions determined re avoiding further incidents. A public education/information program is being re-activated.



The western colony of the ECB is responding well to the fuel reduction burn that took place. Monitoring shows good regrowth of *Bursaria spinosa* and reasonable populations of the butterfly larvae. Park staff conducted a guided walk for the ECB Friends Group. Also the annual spring larvae surveys are beginning on Monday 5th Oct and running through until November 2nd. It's a good fun night time activity (excepting that there are others !) so give the park office a ring if you would like to help out. **Assistance will be appreciated.**

Warrandyte State Park has provided assistance to Manningham City Council in the development of the council's strategy of dealing with wildlife management during a municipal emergency. This includes equipment and skilled staff provision.

The second stage of the Warrandyte and Reserves Vegetation Assessment and Mapping project is underway. The first stage 'Annotated flora list and management requirements' report has been received. Much thanks to our consultant/contractor Cam Beardsall.

Two Green Corps groups spent ten days undertaking weed removal in the park on the northern bank of the Yarra river. Large quantities of ivy, smilax, wandering jew, periwinkle were removed.

WSP had further input into a review of Manningham's review of the Horse Riding Strategy for the municipality. Also assistance to the City of Manningham was provided for a planning overlay review of historical Goldfields assets. This was conducted by consultants with input from Heritage Victoria and PV Historical places branch.

Fuel reduction burn (FRB) plans for the coming fire season have been set. Three FRBs and one Ecological burn are planned for the spring. Another four burns are targeted in the autumn.

The Parks Victoria Grants Advisory Council visited Warrandyte State park on Saturday the 15th August. as part of a district tour. Hospitality (and lunch) was provided by the park and Friends Group. Thanking all who assisted very much!

The felling of dangerous trees has commenced with park staff undertaking most of the work. This was assessed in a recent survey of dead and dangerous trees. Those areas surveyed include Jumping Creek and Black Flat reserves.

An outstanding report from the mines safety 'capital' program has finally been received. This is a GPS (Global Positioning System) survey detailing locations of all mines and mine workings in the high risk zones of Fourth Hill. This will be used as a management tool for general reference in future management of works and permit activities.

More film crews have undertaken filming in various park areas. One commercial children's program, one advertisement for government agency, and one program called 'Neighbours'. Ever heard of it ?

Staff movements - Glen Jameson, from Westerfolds, has now permanently transferred to Warrandyte work centre. Hooray !...and welcome back to an old Fowspian.

Taking your Mind off the Road

By Elsa Ardern

When I travel East to my special corner of New South Wales, just beyond Merimbula, I usually take the 640 kilometres in one day. It is quite a long haul especially on my own, so I make a point of two hourly coffee stops, whether I want them or not. I also take a 'real' stop of one or two hours for lunch, including a walk where possible.

The Bemm River rainforest pocket is well situated for a lunch break and has a very lovely half hour walk over a valley with swing bridges spanning the McKenzie and Bemm Rivers. The variety of vegetation and habitat for birds and animals is displayed in framed pictures explaining each new environment. Reading these and enjoying the atmosphere extends the half hour - all worthwhile to distract from the mesmerising effect of that ribbon of road.

On a recent occasion I headed for this picnic stop. After a snack, rather hurried along by a circle of currawongs hovering hopefully just above the table where I unpacked my goodies (they are so quick to take advantage of any unguarded morsel!), I decided that instead of returning to the entrance of the walk I would take a short cut through the bush to pick up the sealed track a short distance below where I'd parked.

The first surprise was to find myself ankle-deep in mud. I considered calling in at Cann River rangers depot to suggest the track be scraped as it was quite hazardous in this slippery state. Then I met the bridge and discovered this section had dropped towards the river, with only a plank linking the gap. I negotiated this and ascended the steps leading over a ridge to the second bridge. Here a forest giant had fallen across the path. Well "I'm not going back to that plank" I decided, so worked a difficult climb down, through and around branches until I regained the shattered path. But there were further obstacles!

The far end of the second bridge was obstructed by dense bushes which had fallen across and the devastation and damage was so extensive it was amazing any bridge remained. My only hope was to burrow through one side on all fours like a wombat. Head down, and using the wire to guide me, I made it with only minor scratches and pokes in my eye. I emerged eventually and from there it was a matter of detours around obstructing vegetation to the track where, not unexpectedly, I found a barricade and a notice saying 'track closed due to storm damage and flooding'. Well I could vouch for that, but after all it did take my mind off the road!

Note: This article was inspired by the report of a 'Summer Slide Show' (a tour of East Gippsland by slides) written by Cathy Willis in last months newsletter.

Experiencing Glynns with Glen

By Pat Coupar

Behind locked gates and a head-high electric fence - more to keep out marauding dogs than people - lies Glynns. This area, once Melbourne Water land and now owned and managed by Parks Victoria, is situated directly opposite the tunnel at Pound Bend Reserve and follows the river downstream along an old abandoned meander.

The Thursday morning walk was led by ranger Glen Jameson and attracted around 17 Fowspians - something of a record these days. Glen has been closely associated with the evolution of Glynns over several years. During that time a series of billabongs have been constructed that look so natural it's hard to believe they have been artificially created. I couldn't help thinking that given the dollars (many thousands), the same wonderful wetlands could be re-created along the Pound Bend drainage line in the old orchard area below the Warrandyte State Park depot. A vision, not a reality.

Despite lack of recent rain, all but one of the wetlands we saw were holding water, the clarity of which was surprisingly clear. There have been many plantings. And while some of the native sedges and aquatics have been re-introduced, the frogs have come in themselves. There are boardwalks, several incomplete, the grand plan to link them had fallen apart from lack of funds.

The attraction of these wetlands for waders and other aquatic birds was obvious and it was great to see a couple of plump, red-headed, navy blue native hens pecking in the shallows.

Further downstream Glen showed us a point in the river where it is alleged, to use that overused word, the river is 40 feet deep. As no one was prepared to put it to the test we had to take Glen's word for it.

The highlight of the walk for me was not the birds or even the plants, but the view across the river to the cliffs below Naughton Avenue. Sheer slices of rocks rising vertically from the river which, according to our geological expert, were of the Silurian Dargile formation. And speaking of views, the vista from the top of Glynns hill to the distant Dandenongs, clear in the mid-morning sun, was something else.

An Orchid Year

By Joan Broadberry

I discovered native terrestrial orchids and Professor's Hill Warrandyte at roughly the same time. That hillside will always hold magical memories for me as it was there I identified and photographed many orchid species for the first time.

My initial visit was on October 19th 1991. October is a wonderful month for orchids. I well remember the sight of a hill coloured with flowers and a quick race around identifying lilies, spider and sun orchids. I was back the next day with my sister, and with more time, we spent the first of many afternoons scrambling up and down the steep slopes serving our plant identification apprenticeships. We came to know every corner and found such treasures as the Bearded Greenhood, (*Pterostylis plumosa*), Salmon Sun-orchid (*Thelymitra rubra*), Rustyhood (*P. rufa*), and Tiger Orchid, (*Diuris sulphurea*). We didn't even need to climb over the gate to find orchids. Huge lush spider-orchids (probably *Caladenia tentaculata*) were growing by the telegraph pole outside. I'll never forget an afternoon at the end of October, when, with two fellow orchid lovers, we realised the 'green spikes' were onion orchids (*Microtis unifolia*) and they were common. By November 12th I wrote in my diary, "Professor's Hill has turned blue with pincushions, bluebells and sun-orchids". Hot summer winds ended the show for that year, but I knew the Hill had much more to give us.

During 1992 I made many visits. Often several in one week. We were lucky. It was wet, and a very good year for orchids. I often speculate on the delay in our learning if it had been dry. I started early and was rewarded on April 13th with the never-to-be-forgotten jolt of looking down and finding Parsons Bands (*Eriochilus cucullatus*). On May 3rd I was overjoyed to record and photograph Sharp Midge-orchids (*Genoplesium despectans*). July 24th I noted Tall Greenhoods (*Pterostylis longifolia*), Mosquito Orchid (*Acianthus pusillus*), Veined Helmet-orchid (*Corybas dilatatus*) and a single Tiny Greenhood (*Pterostylis parviflora*). We watched impatiently as leaves and buds gradually gave up their secrets. On August 14th a small, round blue green leaf became a Gnat-orchid (*Cyrtostylis reniformis*), and exciting smooth-edged greenhood leaves flowered as Blunt Greenhoods (*Pterostylis curta*). On the 16th we marvelled at Blue Caladenia (*Caladenia caerulea*)

flowering out of bare ground on the top hillside. On the August 24th the exquisite cream and red spider orchid buds (*Caladenia lindleyana*), unfolded. Pre Backhouse and Jeans 'Orchids of Victoria' our dilemma was what to call them. Blunt Greenhoods become common. On August 29th Bluebeards (*Caladenia deformis*), appeared and the whole hill became purple with Coral-pea, (*Hardenbergia violalcea*) and *Hovea linearis*. Nodding Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*), faded, but Leopard Orchids (*Diuris pardina*)

took their place.

White and pink

fingers (*Caladenia*

carnea), erupted all

over the hill and I

wrote "tall and

nodding greenhoods

everywhere". Many

other wildflowers

added to the

spectacle. *Daviesia*

leptophylla, the

Narrow-leaf Bitter-

pea, Common Beard-

heath (*Leucopogon*

virgatus) and many

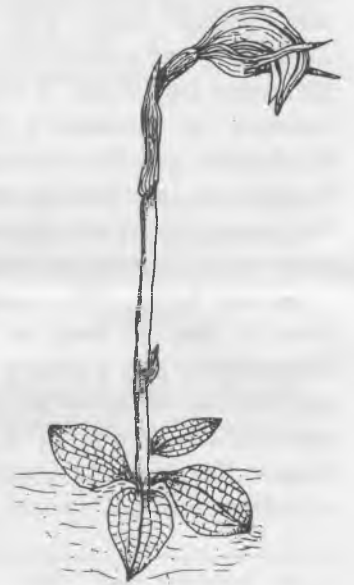
sundews. On August 30th I counted 14 different

orchid species in flower. Waxlips (*Glossodia*

major), were like a carpet.

On a warm September 5th botanist David Cameron, chairperson of the Committee of Management for Professor's Hill, led a Victorian Field Naturalists Club excursion to the hill and I learned some of its history and received a full plant list of 208 species including 37 orchids. Professor's Hill is bounded by Professor's Lane, Research-Warrandyte Rd and Danita Drive. its total area is about 4 hectares. David studied the area for more than 10 years and was instrumental in saving it from subdivision. His plant list, compiled in 1974, indicates a botanical gem. The plant diversity of Professor's Hill was exceeded only by Ferntree Gully, Mt. Buffalo and Wilson's Promontory, and it was richer in orchid diversity than all of these. There are nine species of wattle. The all-important tussocky grass which knits the understorey together, is Silvertop Wallaby-grass (*Chionochloa pallida*).

The name "Professor's Hill" probably comes from the fact that an academic owned or lived on land nearby. Most of the reserve was acquired in 1983 when it was riddled with rubbish and trail bike
...Continued on next page.



An Orchid Year Continued.

tracks. It now belongs to the Nillumbik Council. The area was last burnt in 1962*

By September 22nd I noted 10 orchid species flowering including the Wallflower Orchids (*Diuris corymbosa*) and two distinct types of the Greencomb Spider-orchids. I now know these as *Caladenia parva* and *C. phaeoclavia*.

On October 3rd we found the first Beard-orchid (*Calochilus robertsonii*). October 15th the hillside was yellow with Yam Daisies (*Microseris lanceolata*) and everlastings. Waxlips persisted. By November 3rd I wrote, "a new wave of orchids have flowered at Professor's Hill, Musk Caladenia (*Caladenia gracilis*) Onion and Tiger Orchids, Rustyhoods and Waxlips are gone." The seasons had turned full circle on an unforgettable year of observation, learning and discovery.

It is now spring 1998. I visit Professor's Hill from time to time to keep an eye on things. It is unfortunately only a shadow of its glory seven years ago, but can still throw up a surprise. For example I counted 13 flowers of *Caladenia deformis* on August 30th this year. Overall, there are many less wildflowers of all species. Rabbits have always

been a problem, but I note the Reserve is now completely enclosed by a rabbit proof fence. Nevertheless, many plants appear chewed and the *Caladenia lindleyana* are only thriving because of extra protective cages. Dryness is a big factor. The orchid plants are stunted and now flower very sparingly. Many of the younger wattles and eucalyptus have died, reducing cover to the understorey and badly affecting shade loving species like *Pterostylis pedunculata*, *P. nutans* and *Corybas* spp. Erosion of the steep hillside is a constant problem. Even in 1992 many orchid species such as the *P. rufa* and *P. plumosa* were actually only a few plants and, in time, could only be expected to disappear.

*Noel Schleiger, Field Naturalist News, no 12 Oct/Nov 1992 p 5-7

Editor's Note: Professor's Hill is owned and managed by Nillumbik Council. According to Rebecca Miller, the environmental contact person for the council, a rabbit baiting program is underway inside the fenced area and a committee of management check the fence condition. She also informed us that there has been allocation of funds for small sensitive environmental works such as Quaking Grass (*Briza maxima*) control in some parts of the reserve.

Sunday Family Activity

Longridge to Pound Bend

- Date:** Sunday October 25th
Place: Meet at Longridge Reserve at the end of Alexander Rd. (Melways ref. map 22 H11).
Time: 10.00am for start of walk
1.00pm for barbeque

Andy Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge WSP, is going lead a journey of discovery from little-known Longridge Reserve, following the river upstream through Glynn's (which should be creaking and



croaking with frogs) to Pound Bend Reserve. The walk will involve a car shuffle and couple of river crossings by canoe. All ages will be catered for and pick ups and drop offs can easily

be arranged if you would like to do only a section of the walk. The walk will finish at the 'Folly' where a barbeque and billy tea will be provided by FOWSP. Join us for the barbeque even if you can't make the walk.

For more information ring Andy Nixon at the Park on 9844 2659

Friends of Eltham Copper Butterfly

It's time for the annual Eltham Copper Butterfly larval counts. Dr Beverly Van Praagh, entomologist at the Museum of Victoria, is leading the count. These counts are important as they provide valuable information about the health of the butterfly populations. Furthermore the information will aid in the long term habitat management and species conservation. These

counts are labour intensive and volunteers play a vital role in their success.

If you have never tried this activity it is quite good fun crawling around in the dark looking for the tiny caterpillars. The counts, which begin at 7.00pm (8.00pm daylight savings) and usually go for two to three hours (bring your own torch), will be held on the following dates: **October 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th and November 2nd.** For more information please contact Anna Richtarik 9411 5158 or Beverly Van Praagh 9284 0200.

“I SPY”

By B.G

Helping Hand

Thursday 10th September 1998, too much to be done at the depot nursery and not enough helpers immediately available. The Wonga Park Environment Group and members of FOWSP came to the rescue in the pricking out process.

Those present were Jacqi Penwill, Robyn Burchell, Flora Anderson, Jean Galliot, Carol Easterby, Jannie Vagg, Ray Clarke, Lea Hannah, Alison Thom, Bill Roxburgh, Pat Coupar, 'Josh', Ross Coupar, Ben Gotlib (and Uncle Tom Coby and all). Great effort. Thanks to all.

Orchid Occasion

The same day, at lunchtime, Josh (with 'pressings' and potted plants) and Pat Coupar (with massed plants in two containers), gave a stimulating talk on orchids in the Park and greenhood orchids in particular. *Pterostylis pedunculata*, *P. concinna*, *P. nutans* and *P. curta* were displayed.

It was good to see several rangers and other Park staff there with the 'Friends'.

MacMahon Missions

Joan MacMahon and family are off to the wet tropics - to Cairns and Cooktown, for three weeks. An ornithological survey. News on return.

Peter's Park

Peter Allan, Labour candidate for the Federal seat of Menzies, has selected the Waxlip Orchid as his favourite flower. He likes the purple and white flower and sees it as a "beautiful contrast to the colour of grasses where they grow in open forests." He said "They are protected under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act of 1988, as are other lilies and orchids."

Kevin's 'Coral'

Kevin Andrews MP, Federal member for Menzies, has informed me that he likes the Purple Coral-pea. "It displays vibrant pea flowers in the forest area. It is a persistent plant, a perennial creeper which adds a rich texture to our Park."

Broome Boost

Steve Anderson (ex WSP ranger) and Angie have arrived in Broome after four months travelling. They were made very welcome by people there and the Aboriginal community up the coast. Letter pinned up on Folly noticeboard.

Andrew's Activity

Andrew Nixon, WSP Ranger-in-Charge, has been off for two weeks - "involved in a fire operations officer course."

Arts Activity

Jacqi Penwill of the Melbourne Valley of the Arts Tourist Association indicated the likelihood of a new activity in the area.

Park Pieces

Summer gate closures and 'late walkers' ie. people who want to leave the Park in their cars after the gates are closed. May be on the agenda soon. Mention was also made of work on a car park near 'Whipstick'.

Stall Scene

Seen rostered at our market stall - Ann Barnes, Mark Hassall, Katherine Byrne and Andrew Arnold.

S.W.S.P.O.F

In 'The Victorian Naturalist' (published by the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria since 1884), Volume 115(4), August 1998, page 124, Pat Coupar and David Van Bockel (ranger) have produced a research report titled 'A study of the Warrandyte State Park Orchid Flora from 1991 to 1997.

It is a nine page report with a map, appropriate tables and graphs. This report is so relevant to the Park and its 'Friends' that I-Spy recommends it be photocopied and distributed to all FOWSP members as a special supplement to our monthly newsletter.

Up to you now FOWSP committee.



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