

November 1998

Friends of Warrandyte State Park Newsletter



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

Pound Bend Orchard - a New Beginning

By Pat Coupar

The seeds have been sown for a new beginning for the old orchard below the Rangers depot at Pound Bend. A few weeks ago Ranger, Glen Jameson, with a specially designed machine, direct seeded several prepared sections of this large cleared block of land at the eastern end of Pound Bend Reserve.

This area was added to the Warrandyte State Park in 1984, nine years after the initial declaration of the Park. According to the Park's Management Plan, released in 1990, "the orchard is to be developed in two stages with a major revegetation program as stage one followed by development of a major day-use picnic area with toilets and parking for up to 100 cars."

Historically the fertile alluvial soils of this area were used for growing vegetables and fruit. Several peach trees from that time still remain. Since its incorporation several efforts at revegetation have been undertaken. These have included the construction of a number of 'coupes' (now joined into one) into which primary school children planted tubestock annually on 'arbor day'. In one of these coupes, a few years ago, FOWSP trialled some direct seeding with great success. Another success has been 'Endeavour Bank' - a narrow strip along the edge of the orchard that abuts existing riparian vegetation. The area has been fenced to exclude rabbits, carpeted, mulched and planted. The plants have grown vigorously and the site now requires only minimal ongoing weed control.

Glen is an old hand at direct seeding, having used this technique several times for large areas of Yarra Valley Parklands. Although this time the preparatory weed control was a little hasty and not as thorough as Glen would have liked, the conditions of warmth and rain this spring have provided a perfect opportunity for direct seeding. A selection of eucalypts, wattles and pomaderris were sown into furrows. We eagerly await the germination.

As for stage two, well thankfully it has never got off the ground. Management made the commendable decision that this area of the Park was not conducive to recreational development. As for the helipad, built a few years ago, it has only been used once in two years and will not be maintained as such. It was never part of the plan.



Green Wedge Seminars

Report by Mike Coupar

Echidnas

I had gone to the Green Wedge talk on echidnas determined to ask two specific questions - 'How do they conceive?' to which the only answer I'd ever had in the past was 'with difficulty'! The second was 'how does the mother tolerate her prickly young in the pouch?' Kath Handasyde, a field biologist from the University of Melbourne, was eminently qualified to answer these questions and more from the eager audience of forty or so interested people.

Kath explained with the enthusiasm of a sports commentator, that echidnas are supreme diggers such that they 'subside' into the depths of the earth, that they swim the 'dog paddle', live for 15 to 20 years and despite their armoury of spines occasionally fall prey to dingos and goannas.

Kath showed slides of her work in the Strathbogie Ranges. Here she and a postgraduate student discovered that the echidnas go into torpor (a kind of hibernation) in shallow



burrows during May, June and July. This is enforced by relative lack of food necessitating energy conservation by a dramatic drop in body temperature to 5°C and a breath of air every one or two hours. In August food becomes available for the Strathbogie echidnas in the form of ants, termites and scarab beetle larvae.

And what about the answers to my questions? Well they were answered in graphic detail, but there are some things we just have to find out for ourselves! See you at the next Green Wedge seminar.

Wombats

Wombats obviously have a large fan club judging by the sizable audience they attracted at the recent Green Wedge seminar. Roger Martin, Research Associate from Melbourne University, explained what is known about the secret lives of our wombats.

Although he told us something about the rare Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat and the endangered Northern species, his slide-illustrated talk concentrated on the so called 'Common Wombat'. I was surprised to learn that this is now not the case. As happens all too frequently, the distribution of this animal, which we take for granted, has been in steady decline. Once found from Adelaide to Sydney, their range is now considerably reduced east of Melbourne. Roger Martin laid the blame fairly and squarely at farmers and also successive governments who have failed to protect the wombat, which is still declared 'unprotected wildlife'.

As usual the enthusiastic audience asked many questions. John Hanson delighted us all with tales of his family's 'pet' wombat - a youngster that had lost its mother and appeared at the Hanson's

doorstep one day. The wombat was cared for by the Hanson's and their kids who even took it to their local school. But eventually, like all offspring, the wombat gained in confidence and left its adopted human family.

All the Green Wedge seminars I have attended have been extremely good. I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and knowledge of the presenters. The Manningham Council is to be congratulated for their advertising and for booking the ideal venue at the Warrandyte Community Centre. Special thanks go to our own Alistair Traill who persuades the experts to venture to Warrandyte and who hosts the evening.



A New Fence for the Park

Fowspians had an opportunity to practice their fencing skills once more at Timber Reserve on Thursday October 22nd. Last year the 'Friends' obtained a grant from Parks Victoria to build another rabbit exclusion fence in the Park. The particular area chosen, opposite an earlier very successful fence (recently extended), has some of the highest orchid diversity in the Park.

A generous number of Fowspians turned up to hammer in pegs, clear vegetation and pan out fencing wire. Morning tea was provided and after lunch we were rewarded with a guided walk led by our unassuming, local orchid guru 'JR'. Waxlips, Musky Caladenias, Pink Fingers and Tiger Orchids were still flowering along with Chocolate Lilies, Flax-lilies, Milkmaids and Button Everlastings. The real treat, however, was a colony of huge-leaved Common Bird Orchids, some of which were in flower. For some reason snails, millipedes and rabbits do not seem to graze the semi-succulent leaves. Although a few flower buds had been nipped off.

The fence is now complete and will be carefully monitored over the next few years. At the present time 15 species of orchid are recorded for the area now fenced, this will almost certainly increase now rabbits are excluded from the area.



Thanks to all who came to help save this patch of Warrandyte's significant vegetation.

Wanted Nursery Manager for Warrandyte State Park Nursery

Five hours per week at \$15 per hour.

Applicants must be able to commit at least 2-3 hours each Thursday morning to organise propagation work for the 'Friends of Warrandyte State Park'.

Some experience in propagation and knowledge of indigenous plants essential.

For more information and a job description ring the Park on 9844 2659. Applications in writing by the end of November sent to FOWSP, PO Box 220, Warrandyte, 3113.

Canoe reminder



New members, and may be some old ones too, may not be aware that FOWSP has its own canoe which can be borrowed by

anyone in the group over the age of 18.

The canoe is located in the large open shed beside the back road (open at weekends) to the rangers depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melways ref. 23 C10). For more information ring a member of the committee.

The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) are holding their annual picnic on Sunday 22nd November at 11.00am at Doongalla Homestead, Dandenong Ranges National Park. Entrance (Melways ref. map 66 A6). All members and supporters are invited.

A Brisbane Weekend

Report by Pat Coupar

Strange forces of nature had their way at the Old Mill Camp in the Brisbane Ranges National Park. Rain fell out a clear blue sky, lightening flashed under a canopy of stars, strong winds swirled and thunderclaps reverberated with deafening decibels.

Fowspians were privileged to camp in this remarkable bowl, where gullies dividing steep-sided, mine-riddled hills, converged. Normally the site is reserved for overnight walkers and the Friends of Brisbane Ranges who come to carry out sugar glider surveys here.

As always on these 'Friends' camps the atmosphere around the glowing campfire was relaxed and conducive to congenial conversation. On the Saturday evening Ranger-in-Charge, Chris Worrall, popped in for a chat. Chris was a ranger at Warrandyte State Park over ten years ago and was keen to hear the latest from our neck of the woods.

There were many highlights of the FOWSP weekend camp. The wildflowers lived up to their reputation. Pink, blue and yellow sun orchids responded to Saturday's 30 degree warmth by opening freely. Along the firebreaks yellow, white and purple daisies shared the dry sandy soil with parrot, bush and leafless peas. While white-

flowered tea-tree and yellow guinea-flowers dominated the heathy woodland. Grass Trees were abundant, some healthy and some - due to serious cinnamon fungus invasion - not so.

The three kilometre Anakie Gorge nature trail provided a pleasant stroll on a hot afternoon. The track follows the Stony Creek which has carved a dramatic course through the rocky landscape.

A visit to Steiglitz Historic Park gave us an opportunity to indulge in some gold history. A hundred years ago Steiglitz was booming town with a population of around a thousand, but as the gold ran out the town declined. Some buildings from that time still remain along with some more recent rusty relics. An interesting collection of artifacts were on display inside the old courthouse as well as a fascinating series of photographs documenting the towns decline.

Thanks to Andy Nixon, our Ranger-in-Charge for liaising with his Brisbane Ranges counterpart in organising this most enjoyable weekend.



Posters, Brochures and Cards

Posters

FOWSP now has two posters which will be placed on rotation at the information shelters at Pound Bend and Jumping Creek Reserves. The posters show photographs of 'Friends' activities and the nursery, and has information about the group with contact numbers of two committee members for people who want to find out more.

We are very grateful to ranger Brian Phifley for his artistic talents in putting the posters together.

Brochures

The first print run of our brochure ran out very quickly. This was mainly due to having them available in boxes

at picnic areas for the public to help themselves for free. Unfortunately we cannot afford this luxury, especially as it didn't actually result in any new members. However, it is important to

have brochures for the market and also to hand out at meetings like the Green Wedge Seminars where we have picked up new members, so another 1000 have been printed. We have also applied to Parks Victoria grants program for money to print more next year.

Cards

We have had a new set of greetings cards printed. Four drawings by FOWSP member Melanie Coupar were chosen these are: growling grass frog, echidna, pelican and tawny frogmouth. The cards are available from the market stall for \$1 each.



Flora Management Team Update



By Cathy Willis

The Flora Management Team (FMT) comprises several FOWSP committee members and several Park staff members. It meets at least once every second month to share information, discuss issues affecting the Park and ways that FOWSP can support Park works.

The FMT has covered a wide range of issues in the last six months. Some of these are likely to have long term effects on Warrandyte State Park and FOWSP activities. Others are more mundane matters such as arranging to get weeds picked up after work days or plants and tools transported to a planting day.

Burgan has reared its ugly head (my opinion!) at several meetings. After consultation, we agreed that it should not be planted as part of the Mt. Lofty revegetation, but its role in Warrandyte's vegetation communities and ecosystem management are topics that could be discussed endlessly. (See Pat Coupar's articles in recent newsletters.)

Revegetation commitments for the coming year have been discussed and FOWSP will be growing 6,000 plants for an Autumn planting at Mt. Lofty. As nursery regulars are well aware we have recently grown about 4,000 plants, mainly grasses and sedges, for Melbourne Water plantings at The Island in Warrandyte and Wingrove Park in Eltham. Our other commitments are much smaller. These include growing 500 *Melaleuca ercifolia* seedlings for the Heritage Country Club site upstream of Mt Lofty, eucalypts for Julie Pryor to help feed the koalas in her wildlife shelter; riparian trees and shrubs for a new rabbit proof fence to be erected at Clifford Park; and more of the same for Pound Bend picnic area where many plants are senescing and there is little recruitment of indigenous seedlings.

We have been investigating the use of smoke water to promote natural regeneration in sites around the Park, particularly those areas with

historical records of significant species that have already been fenced. FOWSP member Lea Hannah, who is studying Environmental Science, has been combing through information available on smoke water. She has agreed to do some trials over a three year period. We hope for exciting results but don't hold your breath! When nursery workers have time we will try germinating seed using this method again. We dabbled in it a few years ago, but didn't really follow up results.

Ranger Glen Jameson has carried out extensive direct seeding works at several degraded sites around Pound Bend. (See front page.) He soaked some of the seeds in smoke water for one site and will keep us informed of results.

FOWSP have put in three submissions for this year's round of Parks Victoria (formerly Melbourne Parks and Waterways) grants. The FMT is an excellent forum for FOWSP to get staff feedback on whether our projects are appropriate and how they might impact on the Park. We have been very successful in the past with grants, but are wary of applying for money for materials when we struggle with the person power to carry out the labour. This year two of our submissions involve employing a contractor. More news if we are successful.

Botanical consultant Cam Beardsall, who has had so much input into flora management in WSP in the past, is working on mapping vegetation communities in the wider area including WSP. It's a great year after a couple of drought years to be closely studying our bush so we are eager to see his report.

The centre of the carpark at Normans Reserve has been fenced and treated for weeds. FOWSP recently held a planting morning there and with recent rains this very public area should soon look a picture.

Periwinkle Mound, the very first area tackled by Friends of the Koornong (FOK), is in a sorry state due to rabbit grazing and the edges being run over by the rubbish truck. A couple of FMT members had a site visit and agreed on fencing and pine log repositioning to allow easier truck turning. FOK will follow up with planting and rejuvenate the area.

This is just a taste of what goes on at FMT meetings. If you have an issue you would like to bring to our attention please jot us a note to the P.O. Box or give me a ring and we will put it on the agenda for the next meeting early in December.

New Territory

Officially or unofficially, the hill is known as Mount Warrandyte. From its peak, in the distance, it was possible to see the fire tower on Mount St Leonard. The Great Dividing Range looked very close, the Dandenongs even closer and closest of all was Fourth Hill. Between them no suburbs could be seen and if you didn't know better it was easy to be deceived that the bush was continuous from hills to mountains.

Warrandyte State Park's Ranger-in-Charge, Andy Nixon, led the walk on Sunday October 25th which attracted a diverse group of people ranging in age from under one to over eighty.

Starting at Longridge it was a short stroll to Mount Warrandyte. From this mighty mountain we traversed ridges and valleys - new territory for

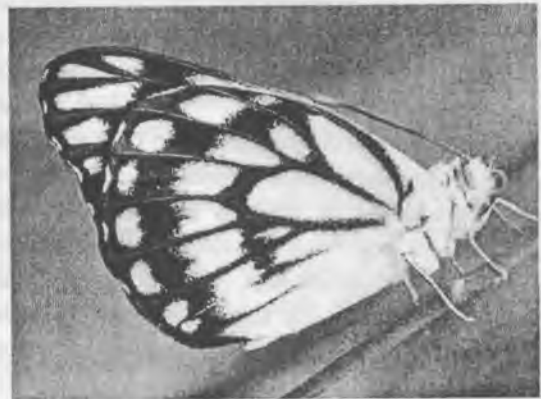
most, if not all of us - emerging at the Yarra River opposite Glynn's Reserve. After a welcome respite and fresh pineapple slices, we ascended Naughton's cliffs. The view of the river below was inspiring. Onwards to the more familiar territory of Pound Bend Reserve and koalas. The final section of the walk followed the river along a narrow track, across boardwalks and out to the large cleared area of the old orchard. At the 'Folly' a barbeque was in preparation while cars were retrieved.

Thanks to Andy Nixon for planning and leading the walk and to Janie Vagg for organising the delicious barbeque. And apologies to those who came for the canoe crossings which didn't eventuate because of difficulty of access. Looks like we might have to organise a special canoe day.

Butterfly Capers

Did you notice all those white butterflies flying around the bush at the end of last month? They were Caper White butterflies, which frequently attract attention by their mass migrations into southern South Australia and Victoria during spring. Large numbers of the butterflies have been seen in Adelaide and Melbourne and some butterflies have even been noticed in Tasmania. This is remarkable since the butterflies travel from southern New South Wales and northern South Australia where the caterpillars feed on various species of Caper (Family Capparidaceae).

These sporadic migrations into southern regions occur during November and December and may be a two-way journey. This year's



arrivals would have been assisted by the strong northerly winds. It is not known what benefit is gained from the migrations other than it may be a way of ensuring that the butterfly is able to exploit the entire range of its foodplant.

Around the State

Rotamah Island

By Ray Clarke

The Island, in the Gippsland Lakes, is the place to be in the spring. Wading birds are coming back from the northern hemisphere. Pelicans, terns and many other water birds are flocking, the bush is full of little birds, and walkers see kangaroos, emus, hog deer, echidnas and wombats. On the many bush tracks there are wild flowers and orchids and a causeway takes you to the Ninety Mile Beach.

The accommodation is comfortable, the food splendid and the Wardens, Barbara and Peter, give a warm welcome to singles, couples and families. They are the incumbents for Birds Australia (previously the RAOU) at the Victorian Bird Observatory, and carry out bird counts, bird banding and are the local carers for the threatened little tern and fairy tern.

I have recently returned from a happy weekend with a house of sixteen people including Brian and Jennie Thomas, rangers from Coolart, who increased our knowledge of nesting habits.

For those who wish to visit, talk to me, 9844 2351; or phone the Observatory. (03) 5156 6398.

Supporting the Stall

Market stall helpers on October 3rd were: Diane Baird, Gillian Beddington, Lyn Wilson and Wolfgang Krause. Ross Coupar also turned up to disassemble the stall helped by Wolfgang.

Auction Activity

Mark Brown, work experience student from Norwood Secondary College, worked with our 'Friends' group, potting on plants and preparing the large pots to be auctioned at our annual general meeting on Sunday November 29th. Also helping were three visitors - Matt, Cecilia and Ethan Le Duc.

Soup Surprise

Just when we thought the Thursday soup lunches were finished for the year, Jan Tindale put on a delicious impromptu mushroom, spinach and bacon soup with bread. Much appreciated by all.

Cameron's Car

David Cameron is not invisible at all. He was seen driving his brown FJ Holden around the back blocks of Warrandyte some weeks ago.

Suspended Species

After the imbroglio of the Federal election was over, I Spy had intended to ask individual Nillumbik and Manningham councillors about their favourite indigenous plants. However, due to a State Government sortie the elected Nillumbik councillors have been suspended so I hope to talk to Manningham councillors about their performance.

Commendable Community Co-operation

Members of the Maroondah Bushwalking Club will be taking Grade 5 students from Ringwood Primary School on a walk in Warrandyte State Park on November 18th. It will be an easy eight kilometre stroll between Black Flat and Blue Tongue Bend.

'Depot doings'

While Park staff were at Mt Buffalo, Anna Richtarik 'womaned' the depot phones.

Mind the Mines

In early October a group of walkers from a Neighbourhood Community House (not Warrandyte) arrived at Geraghty's mine on Fourth Hill. Three walkers decided to go in the mine with one small torch. More than half an hour later the walkers emerged, quite shaken. While doing the 'depths' of the mine they had become slightly dis-orientated and worried. A sobering reminder that even small local excursions can have potential problems.

Minutae from the Minutes

(October committee meeting)

- Display posters completed
- Submission to National Community Links Award for Pound Bend Activities and Environmental Interpretation Area
- New Regional Manager, Jennifer Lilburn.
- Direct seeding underway in old orchard.
- Weekend Park staffing now on a district roster - means staff will not always be available in Warrandyte on weekends.

Anti Ring Road Organisation (Arro) Update

Joint Submission to the Scoresby Freeway Environment Effects Statement (EES)

The Anti Ring Road Organisation has made a joint submission with 40 other community groups to the Scoresby Freeway EES. The Scoresby Freeway is the southern section of the proposed Eastern Ring Road. The submission exposed several serious inadequacies of the EES. One of these inadequacies is that there has been no consideration given to the long term effects of a Scoresby Freeway on Manningham, Nillumbik or Banyule.

It was an excellent achievement to have so many

different community groups all putting their names to this first class submission.

The next step in the EES process is for the panel hearings which will run from the 10th of November to the 23rd of December. These public hearings will be held in the Panel Hearing Room, ground floor west, Oldfleet Buildings, 477 Collins Street Melbourne. This will be when arguments about the cost and effects of the Scoresby Freeway can be brought forward publicly.

Editors Note: FOWSP was one of the 40 community groups to put their name to the joint submission.



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