

October 2001

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

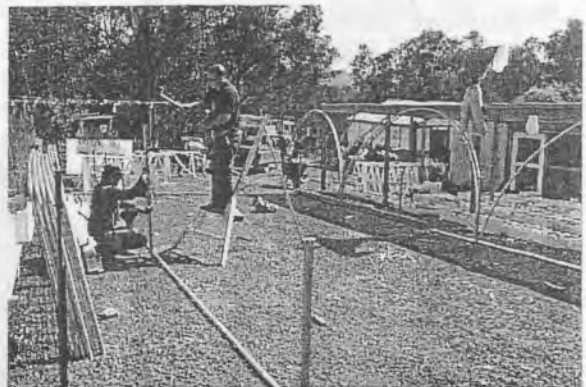
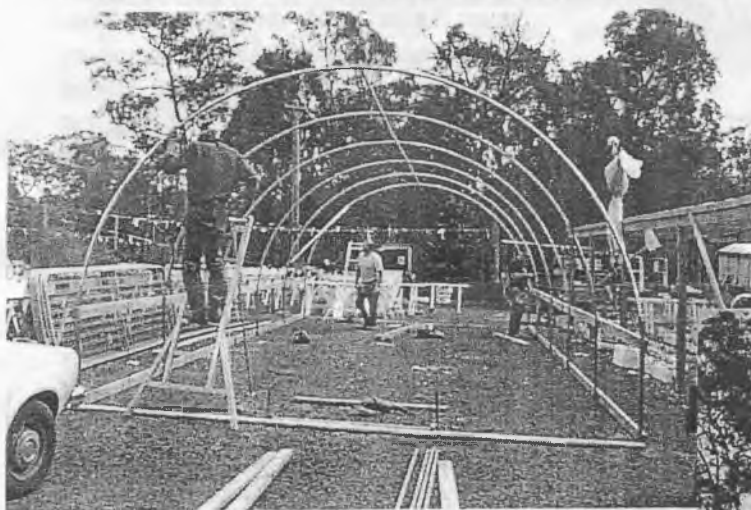
The New Polyhouse has Arrived



Last month FOWSP took delivery of a new polyhouse. It was erected within a day and the watering installed shortly after.

Now it is already housing many young seedlings.

Thanks to Cathy Willis, JR (the Nursery Manager) and Park staff for all their work in researching the project, organising the purchase and supervising the final construction of the new polyhouse.



Photos taken by Ranger, Brian Phefley

One Tree Hill Reserve Excursion

September 1st 2001

Report by Flora Anderson

August's Newsletter had promised a "special treat" for the first day of September, and that was exactly what was delivered by Campbell Beardsell to a group of 20 or so lucky Fowspians at Christmas Hill's One Tree Hill Reserve.

Since his student days at LaTrobe University, where he gained his BSc in Botany, Cam has been a strong conservationist, using his science to join in the battle to protect the dwindling remnants of Victoria's biodiversity.

Before we started the walk downhill from The Tanks carpark, Cam reminded us of the importance of One Tree Hill as a bioregion reserve which would connect Watsons Creek with Kinglake by means of a biolink in accordance with LCC recommendations.

One Tree Hill's position in a transitional zone between four different biological regions is reflected in its diverse plant communities and sub-communities. The area contains more than four hundred plant species, including sixty-five orchid species and twenty fern species.

This twenty-five hectare reserve, with an altitude of three hundred and forty metres, is also geologically interesting as one of the Silurian derived sedimentary hills of the Middle Yarra. North of Christmas Hills, Silurian rocks were intruded by granite and eroded before being covered by Early Devonian strata.

One Tree Hill has a history of mining, in fact a gold mine has been recently re-opened at the head of Happy Valley Creek which runs through the centre of the reserve.

Now uncommitted Crown Land managed by DNRE, the reserve has as its neighbours, Melbourne Water owned land and private property.

Friends of One Tree Hill, of which Cam and Diane Silveri are members, was formed in 1990.

The walk took us from Box/Stringybark Woodland, with mainly herbaceous ground cover, down through Herb-rich Foothill Forest to Valley

Heathy Forest. We moved on through Damp Forest to the Wetlands of Happy Valley Creek and uphill via Ornata Valley to the spot where we encountered Cam's Rosella Orchid research plot.

It was interesting to see the changes in the composition of the vegetation communities, from sparse middlestorey to tall Messmate and Mountain Gum and an ever increasing understorey. We noted how different plants indicated the change, e.g. Forest Wire Grass (*Tetrarrhena juncea*), Firewheel Groundsel (*Senecio linearifolia*) and Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum aethiopicum*), Tree-ferns, Gristle-fern (*Blechnum cartilagineum*) and Tender Brake (*Pteris tremula*). King Fern (*Todea barbara*) used to be present, but was ruthlessly removed, presumably for domestic gardens and the nursery trade.

Damp Forest is the preferred habitat of Brown Antechinus (*Antechinus stuartii*), Powerful Owl, Red-browed Treecreeper and Mountain Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus caninus*). Reports of Lyrebirds calling have pleased the Friends Group. This happy return is probably due to the gradual building up of middlestorey strata over the years since gold mining and other disturbances ceased. As yet, no survey of non-vascular plants has been carried out. It is worth noting that the bat colony is being monitored.

Happy Valley is a wonderful demonstration of regeneration following massive gravel extraction works carried out in the years when most of the roads of the North Riding of Eltham were formed. The creek is now finding its way through the rubble and it was here that an alert member of the group noticed a pellet containing the indigestible remains of a Powerful Owl's meal (bristles, bone fragments, hair, beetle wings etc). All owls regurgitate pellets.

Here in Happy Valley I was delighted to see, still there, a beautifully mossed old log lying across the gully. In the moss, just as I had first seen it about eight years ago, was a dense colony of Maroonhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*) in flower.



While we are thinking about orchids I'll list those we saw on the walk:

Tall Greenhood (*Pterostylis melagramma*)

Nodding Greenhood (*P. nutans*)

Maroonhood (*P. pedunculata*)

Leopard Orchid (*Diuris pardina*)

Early Caladenia (*Caladenia praecox*)

Red-lipped Spider Orchid (*C. oenochila*)

Little Pink Spider Orchid (*C. rosella*)

Blue Fingers (*Cyanicula caerulea*)

Leaves only of Sun-orchids (*Thelymitra* spp) were also seen. The Elbow Orchid (*Arthrochilus huntianus*) was mentioned, but not seen.



Some interesting plants in the wetland are the Bullrushes or Cumbungi (*Typha domingensis*) and *T. orientalis*, Tall Rush (*Juncus procerus*), Creeping Raspwort (*Gonocarpus micranthus*), Swamp Starwort (*Stellaria angustifolia*) and Swamp Goodenia (*Goodenia humilis*) which flowers under water.

Having been told there were one hundred and ninety plant species there, including a new Cranesbill, we stepped warily into Ornata Valley. This area is named for Mike Braby after a butterfly - the Spotted Skipper (*Hesperilla ornata*) see Flying Colours p. 95)

The new Valley Cranesbill, presently *Geranium* sp14) is to be named after Cam Beardsell, an honour we thought richly deserved. *G. sp14* differs from *G. retrorsum* in that there are no hairs on the stems. Currently it is known at only six sites.

At the top of Ornata Valley we were greeted by a "host of golden daffodils" on private property adjacent to the reserve. We were pretty surprised I must admit when Cam drew us towards them for a discourse on vintage *Narcissus*. It seems that these are survivors from an early settler's garden

on that site and they've not travelled far in a long time by the look of it.

It was Randall Robinson who had given the following information to Cam and I must confess that we were intrigued. The wild daffodil or Lent Lily, (*Narcissus pseudonarcissus*) was still there unchanged and so was the Jonquil or Bunch-flowered *Narcissus* (*Narcissus tazetta*) - very popular at the French Court of the 18th Century. Probably very useful for smothering the smell of the great unwashed aristocracy!

At last we reached Cam's Rosella Spider Orchid recovery/research plot, fenced in 1996 to exclude rabbits and other unwelcome predators. This endangered species is a very special little plant indeed which was once widespread across the Victorian Goldfields and is now known only from four surviving sites in the world. These are on the NE outskirts of Melbourne and another near Stawell. With fewer than two hundred plants, it is considered on the verge of extinction. In the One Tree Hill site there are now thirty-two plants, sixteen of which are flowering.

Cam has discovered, through very careful observation, that the natural pollinator is a tiny, as yet unnamed, native bee belonging to the Coletidae Family, which is attracted to the flowers by the bright colours and a reward of nectar. The production of viable seed is crucial in the *Caladenia* genus as reproduction in most *Caladenia* species is only possible by seed - seed so tiny they hold almost no food reserves for the germinating embryo. The orchid depends on a mycorrhizal fungus, which actively invades the cells upon germination of the seed, to supply nutrients for continuing growth. Wonderful stuff!

And just as wonderful is the bee whose mouth parts are adapted to take pollen from *Acacias*. Cam, having observed the little pollinator in action many times, described the process to an enthralled audience.

The bee lands on the hinged labellum and makes its way to the nectar deep in the centre of the flower, emerging backwards with a tiny crest of pollinia having brushed past the column (the united stamens, style and stigma) on its way out.

Cam has noticed that there are times when the bee on entering a flower with the pollinia atop seems very careful not to dislodge it, but at other times is careful to deposit on the column. Does the bee know when the stigma is receptive?

Another scenario..... On p.78 of "Orchids of the West", Rica Erickson tells how the late R.S. Rogers of South Australia described how a small native bee *Halictus subinclinans* pollinates the Blue Fairy Orchid. "The bee with pollinia

One Tree Hill Reserve Excursion contd.

attached to its thorax was seen crawling on the tip of the labellum. The dense mat of calli made a good foothold. It then pursued its way into the flower's tube formed by the rigid labellum and the column. It was able to enter this space but had to exert pressure to widen the tube sufficiently to reach the basal calli. After a short interval it backed out, having apparently deposited the pollinia on the stigma and removed those in the anthers. For when the bee was captured it was seen that the stigma of the orchid had received pollinia, that the anthers were empty and that the bee bore pollinia on its back." Note that the labellum of this orchid *Caladenia deformis* is fixed.

As *Caladenia rosella* flowers July-September this is a busy time for Cam who visits the site thrice weekly to hand pollinate, keeping careful records of the procedures and results. That one plant has taken three years from recruit to flowering, is just one of the surprising observations made by this most meticulous and enthusiastic young scientist.

He showed us a "mother/daughter" pair of plants in flower the one looking the perfect clone of the other.

We were indeed a privileged group that day in Early Spring 2001 at One Tree Hill.

For a detailed description of the Rosella Spider Orchid, turn to "The Orchids of Victoria" by Gary Backhouse and Jeffrey Jeanes (1995)

Also worth reading is "A Year of Orchids" (1983) illustrated by Clifton Pugh with text by Cam and David Beardsell.



Tuan Fro 2

21 of the FOWSP's 50 Tuan (Brush-tail Phascogales) nest boxes have now been constructed by Thursday morning volunteers.

The first attempt to install the next boxes resulted in "back to the drawing board". The wire straps which make the boxes much easier and safer to position, caused the boxes to be wobbly. By reducing the length and leaning on the boxes after installation, they now sit firmly, whilst allowing for tree growth over many years.

Why all the fuss about a creature, which is rare in Warrandyte, and hardly anyone will ever see? Simply, they are likely to become locally extinct due to car and cat predation*, and loss of their major food source (fallen logs = firewood). Additionally, they are extremely cute animals, with big eyes and a long bushy tail. I'm totally surprised that they haven't found their way into

Australia's folklore, but considering that 25 of Victoria's 89 mammal species are already extinct, there is a cultural blindness to our natural heritage.

Tuans occupy up to 30 different nest sites in any year, using a common strategy to minimise risk of predation by owls. An active nest site will contain a ball-shaped nest of stringybark and feathers, rather than a sugar glider's nest of leaves. Rangers at WSP will use FOWSP's new nest boxes (as well as existing boxes) and approx. 50 boxes built by Greencorps to monitor Phascogale numbers.

*40 dead tuans have been collected by WSP Rangers in the last 10 years killed by cars and cats. The 4,200 Ha high quality tuan habitat of the Chiltern Regional Park is estimated to contain only 35-50 breeding females.

Next Month ~ Choosing the best locations for FOWSP'S 50 Tuan nest boxes.

Tea with the Minister

2001 is the International Year of the Volunteer and September was Biodiversity Month. To celebrate this FOWSP, along with representatives from a wide range of environmental groups, were invited to a function at LaTrobe University's Wildlife Reserve to acknowledge the contribution that volunteers make to the preservation of biodiversity.

The setting at Ironbark Hut was most fitting, although finding it in the middle of the Reserve was not a simple matter.

After some brief introductions, Sherryl Garbutt, the Minister for Environment and Conservation, spoke. Firstly she explained biodiversity, giving some examples of different types of ecosystems such as alpine, mallee, grasslands, forests, heathlands, inland waterways and marine. She quoted figures of the plants and animals these environments support: over 3000 species of plants, 900 lichens, 750 mosses and liverworts, 111 mammals, 447 birds, 46 freshwater fish, 600 marine fish, 133 reptiles 33 amphibians and countless invertebrates. It would have been interesting to know the source of this data.

The minister talked about the significant contribution volunteers make to the protection and management of the Victorian environment. As an example she singled out one group – The Friends of the Eltham Copper Butterfly, probably because of the political connection with one of the Butterfly Reserves which was named after a former Labour Minister, Pauline Toner, who sadly died at an early age.



Apparently it is estimated that around 700,000 Victorians - about 20% of the adult population - volunteer annually. This, it was qualified later, includes volunteers in all walks of life, not just the environment. Would that it were!

The function was well attended. Perhaps better than anticipated because the afternoon tea, or at least the food, disappeared very fast. You had to be quick or else you missed out.

However, the get together was a good opportunity to catch up with the many familiar faces from members of other conservation groups to Parks Victoria and DNRE staff.

Those who attended took home certificate of appreciation, a bright orange plastic mug supplied by DNRE - the best thing about which, was that it was made in Australia - and a 'Hands up for Volunteering' badge. And although it felt a bit like being back at school (or even kinder), it's the thought that counts!

Library News

By Judy Green

The FOWSP library has a wide range of over 180 books, many of which may be borrowed by signing in the register in the Park office. Please note some of the more valuable books or those needed by the rangers as available references have red spots on the spine. These may be referred to on the premises but must not be taken away.

A recent survey of the library shows the following books missing:

B205 Field Guide to Birds of Australia (Updated) - Simpson & Day

EN504 Discover Warrandyte – FOWSP

FL606 Flora of Melbourne

FL610 A Field Guide to the Indigenous & Exotic Grasses of the Yarra Valley Melbourne Parks and Waterways

FR1301 Fire - Bruce Bence

F1 Australian Pond & Stream Life

F901 Biological Information for Management of Freshwater Fish in Victoria

Could any of these be forgotten and hiding on your shelves? Please return them if they are. There are also several books somewhat overdue which need to be returned.

Spot a Koala, Get a Sausage

As part of the ongoing effort to understand the status of our urban koala population, the annual eastern suburbs koala count will be conducted on Sunday November 11th.

Parks Victoria rangers are once again requesting the help of F.O.W.S.P to participate in the annual count of koalas within Warrandyte State Park. The count will begin at 9.00am from the WSP Office at Pound Bend Rd.

The count is expected to last a few hours and will cover most of the Park. The day will conclude with a complimentary B.B.Q at the Folly. Guest Chief for the day will be Brain (how do you like your sausage) Phefley.

Last year 32 koalas were spotted in Warrandyte State Park, I am hoping that with a few more volunteers we will find over 40 koalas this year. Bring the family along for an enjoyable day in the Park, and help Parks Victoria determine urban koala populations.



All interested people please contact Kay Williams on 9844 2659

Worth Repeating

Green Wedge activists - unite now!

With Ivan Kolker
(Support Liaison Coordinator)

Sheila Newman, of Sustainable Population Australia, has begun a project to help organize "Defenders of Green Zones, Animals and Plants" (DOGZAP) by identifying and putting in touch with each other environment groups located near unifying physical structures.

The initial structures contemplated are the "Green Wedges" of metropolitan Melbourne defined in the late 1960s and 1970s. They have suffered a battering, but the vestiges still extend along areas of natural significance, roughly like spokes in a wheel.

The Green Wedges (located between "Urban Growth Corridors") were probably the last coherent geographical planning scheme in Melbourne.

They were defined so as to contain most of the significant environmental areas and water catchments.

The growth corridors that they separated were supposed to be about 6.5 - 9.5 km wide and to contain all new development.

Going clockwise, the Green Wedges are located in the following areas: Werribee South,

Derrimut, Calder, Woodstock, Kinglake - Yarra, Dandenongs, Cranbourne, Springvale.

The Growth Corridors were supposed to be Werribee, Melton, Sunbury, Merri, Plenty, Lilydale, Berwick and Frankston.

SPA Victoria wants to hear from groups defending areas in or near the remaining wedges.

Ideally the project would later be expanded to encompass rural and metropolitan areas, at State and National levels, utilizing networks like Landcare and the Biodiversity Network, as well as SPA's other branches.

It is hoped that, by combination of population activism and opposition to infrastructure and housing expansion, land clearing will become more difficult and the property development industry will find other things to do with its money.

Since many upstream industries like sand mines and forestry, and downstream industries like banks and building societies, rely heavily on the property development industry, this will not be easy.

However activists need to organize at local, State and National level because the property development and housing industries are highly organized at all these levels.

Please contact Sheila
smnaesp@alphalink.com.au or Ph. 9783 5047.

Source: *Environment Victoria Newsletter, October 2001*



By B.G

New Nissen

A plastic Nissen hut structure has 'grown' between the large shadehouse and the top hardening off areas.

Dimensions are: 10.67 metres long, 4.9 metres wide and 3 metres high at the arch top.

Someone called it 'Cathy's Igloo'. Why?

I. I. C

Glen Jameson has been I.I.C at the Park for 10 days whilst Andy Nixon has been on holidays and a boat training course.

Library Listing

Judy Green has produced a new listing of books in the FOWSP library.

Swamp Seen and Screams Heard

Austin Polley reports that a swamp wallaby was seen below Hutchinson Avenue. Also, not necessarily connected, unidentified animalistic screams were heard.

Nesting Box Numbers

At the beginning of September Geoff Speedy led a team aiming to produce fifty nest boxes so far with the aid of Don, Josh, and Trevor. 21 boxes have been completed and painted. Incidentally,

Lee Cameron was seen wielding a brush with great dexterity.

Plant Prickout Out

Thursday 27th September, on site Jason Horlock, Greening Australia Victoria, talked and demonstrated to over fourteen people the art of pricking out plants for maximum success.

Immediately after, Friends applied their new understanding in a down to earth do and discuss session.

Those present received a detailed multi-page guide to peruse later. Comments about the session were: "very enlightening", "very informative", "tremendous", "fabulous", "marvellous". The facilitator for the event was Elaine Bayes.

Louise, Louise

Two of those pricking out later were Louise Baker and Louise Wigmore.

Reporter Rachel

Rachel Baker (of the Warrandyte Diary) was seen 'with serious intent' around the Friends activity on October 4th. Will this lead to startling revelations in a local publication.

Photographic Foray

A small group of flower-photo-takers were led by Melanie on a walk recently. One of Melanie's favourite plants is *Themeda triandra* (Kangaroo Grass).

A visit to Hochkins Ridge Flora Reserve

Date: Thursday October 25th

Time: 10.00am

Where: Meet at Manuela St (off Neuparth Rd), Croydon Nth (Melway ref. 36K7)

Our guide for the morning will be Helen Moss – a well known local naturalist and conservationist and an expert on the flora of the area.



Botanical Meanings

Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*)

Acacia (Gr.) akakia, from akazo to sharpen
implexa – entangled, referring to the pods





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Imperial White Butterfly (*Delias harpalyce*)

This butterfly may be confused with the Wood White which is slightly smaller, but similar in colour with white and black on the outside of its wings and splashes of black, red and yellow on the undersides.

The caterpillars of the Imperial White are gregarious and feed on mistletoe, resting and then pupating on a large silken sheet spun across the stems of its foodplant.

Keep a look out for both these butterflies on warm days.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Family \$20

Single \$15

Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113