

May 2002

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

The Greening of Warrandyte

By Pat Coupar

For the last couple of months a green group has been active in Warrandyte. I'm not talking about our own Friends of Warrandyte State, nor is it a political party. This group of ten young people is called the Green Corps and they are out in force in the Warrandyte State Park.

The Green Corps is a federal government funded initiative that encourages young unemployed people to gain training and experience and eventually, if desired, employment in various aspects of environmental restoration.

Ranger Glen Jameson was instrumental in obtaining this current group for Warrandyte, having bid successfully for their services for the continuation of the 'Biolink' project. Glen is co-ordinator of the group's activities and oversees the program which involves a broad range of environmental work. Supervisor of the group is Mark Gardner, known to many as a Warrandyte resident and long time Fowspian member.

Like last year this is a joint project with Yarra Valley Parkland, however, this year Warrandyte is the major focus for the group. As part of their 26 week course, approximately ten weeks will be spent undergoing training regimes. The group will attend various expert-led workshops on a range of subjects including the identification of indigenous and introduced plants, fungi, herbicide use, fox pads, nest boxes, bat trapping etc.

Glen has designed the revegetation projects which are concentrated on following up last year's work along the river and old orchards at Pound Bend, and planting at Stane Brae, Norman Reserve and Yarra Brae.

Already the group has been removing guards from last year's planting and learning propagation techniques at the nursery. Also on the agenda for the year is: survey and assessment of vegetation conditions and evaluation of habitat – noting what might be wrong or missing, weed mapping and woody weed treatment. On the fauna front, bat trapping in the mines and fox surveys have been carried out so far, while roo counts and general mammal trapping is still to be done.

The Green Corps training course provides young people with a great opportunity to learn about the environment and how to care for it. Many of those who graduate go on to seek work in various fields of environmental management. Some, like last year's participant, Josie Lee, even become FOWSP members. Not only did Josie join our group, she has also rejuvenated the Friends of Stony Creek – a group that Mark Gardner set up years ago.

The Warrandyte State Park is a wonderful natural asset that must be conserved. Threats from introduced plants and pest animals are ever present and a helping hand is always welcome to restore and revegetate degraded areas. Over the next few months the Green Corps will be doing their bit to help preserve our special environment. Look out for them next time you are in the Park.

One FOWSPian's Recollections

By Val Polley

Do you remember Andy Nixon's front page article about volunteers in the September newsletter. Well it got me thinking, who else, amongst current 'Friends' remembers the first tentative beginnings of FOWSP when a group of interested residents gathered in the old Getson building (where the Community Centre now stands) to discuss the formation of a 'Friends' group.

Kris Reinertsen, the then Ranger, was keen to emulate the success of the Friends of Organ Pipes whose endeavours had just begun to make a real impact on that Park. Kris had organised an interesting evening with speakers from Organ Pipes, the Department and his wonderful photos of orchids in Warrandyte State Park. By the end of the evening there was enough excitement and enthusiasm to form a committee and start planning.

My memories of those earliest days were of once a month working bees in various sections of the Park. With the new group being run by an enthusiastic bunch of men, I recall cutting down pines and pulling pine seedlings on Fourth Hill, clearing out car bodies and heavy rubbish in The Common, track work at Black Flat and clearing out rubbish from Geraghty's mine tunnel and its air shaft on Fourth Hill. Those early days focussed much more on cleaning up and construction type tasks.

FOWSP members came from all over Melbourne at that time as there were few other active urban environment groups. I remember one man who caught buses from Richmond to be there and another lass who drove from South Yarra. Things jogged along fairly well, but gradually membership and enthusiasm declined and meeting attendances dwindled. A crisis meeting called by Michael Duffy was held and the way forward rethought. However, it was not till Glen Jameson and Peter Van Dijk took over as coordinators that FOWSP really began to expand and make its mark.

A yearly program of monthly (Sunday) working bees was planned in advance and advertised. These activities covered a wide range of tasks and were designed to appeal to a wide range of people. Some working bees were plant based, others construction based, all were interesting and followed by billy tea and cake or

lunch and combined with walks and talks to inform and educate.

Efforts were made to follow up on work so there was an annual broom pull, an annual onion weed day (I have fond memories of senior management at Melbourne Region of the Department of Conservation, Forest and Lands actually out in a Park and getting their hands dirty and mixing it with the volunteers!). There were other refinements; signs directing people to the working area and a regular newsletter. I was the editor, we designed the logo, no computers of course, it was all done on a typewriter with cut and paste editing and photocopied, (courtesy of my husband's firm). FOWSP also started their regular participation in the Warrandyte Festival (who can forget the animal masks Glen made and his faithful green truck providing the base for the float).

Then Glen left on a trip round Australia and Margaret and Ian Burke came forward to coordinate and drive the 'Friends' onwards. Under their regime the emphasis once again changed. Margaret's great people skills

saw an increase in the number of members and their participation. Sunday working bees declined and there was a shift towards education, nursery work, planting projects, the Folly, Frogland, market stall etc etc. FOWSP gained a very high profile within the Department of Natural Resources and Environment with its ground breaking work (in every way!!). Ian's philosophical and informative newsletter gained a wide readership. FOWSP was regarded as a model of volunteer participation.

Continued on next page



One Fowspian's Recollections continued:

With such strong membership and enthusiasm FOWSP has continued to prosper and grow under the current broad-based, committed committee. The emphasis has again shifted with the nursery and revegetation work at the forefront of activities. The Thursday program continues to flourish, the nursery prospers as a result of very hard work and an enthusiastic nursery manager, there are well-attended special events and a monthly market presence with a new stall. It remains a shining example of how volunteer effort can be channelled into significant and meaningful work.

I was at that original meeting and am proud to still be a member (if only an occasional worker)

Sunday Breakfast with the Birds

14 April 2002.

A summary of an Easter Holiday Interpretation activity in Warrandyte State Park at Pound Bend

By Ranger, David Farrar

A 5:30am start at the Warrandyte State Park office to prepare myself before meeting an enthusiastic group of twenty-five at 6:30am, at Pound Bend Picnic area. I was excited and tried to get my mind into the education and interpretation way of thinking. By the time I was in the Pound Bend Picnic area at 6:15, I was enjoying being observant and looking for birds. I had listed fourteen bird species as it was getting light, most were identified by sound alone. It was great and I felt like a ranger should feel, with out the constraints of other worries and to be with the birds I love so much and at times taken for granted.

The morning was slightly overcast with a tinge of autumn coolness in the air and the sun starting to stretch its golden rays over the Yarra River. I made a quick introduction to the group on why birds are important part of Warrandyte State Park's biodiversity and how birds are good environmental indicators. A quick explanation on how to focus binoculars, how to accurately spot the bird you want, then how to look for identifying marking on the bird to work out the species and away we went.

We spent the first thirty minutes in Pound Bend Picnic area before walking the complete Pound Bend circuit to meet up with Brian for our

of FOWSP. Andy asked if volunteers return to see previous plantings, well yes I confess to keeping an eye on prior plantings and I get real pleasure crossing the little bridge at the end of the Pound Bend Reserve on the walk to Gallatlys Lane. I remember building it with its telephone pole cross beams with husband Austin, a ranger and two other FOWSPians during one cold and miserable working bee many years ago and it's still there and frequently used!

There is indeed a huge and ongoing satisfaction in volunteering and not just through giving but also for receiving and for the personal satisfaction it brings. It was great to see volunteering recognised and appreciated last year during the Year of the Volunteer, let's just hope it never gets taken for granted!!

magnificent Sunday breakfast of pancakes, tea, and coffee.

What a morning it was! In the Pound Bend Picnic area alone we observed Sulphur-Crested Cockatoos, Long-Billed Corellas, Galahs, and one Gang-Gang Cockatoo was heard. Four species of cockatoo were seen or heard in the first half an hour. Then I sighted two Australian King Parrots that landed at the top of Manna Gums next to the Yarra River. We also saw Eastern Rosellas and Crimson Rosellas, and heard squawks which focused our attention on Rainbow Lorikeets zooming past. We continued on to see many other species of birds and nine koalas along the river during the walk.

Two highlights stand out in my mind. The meeting of a young eight year-old girl named Danielle, who had amazing observation skills. She could tell by looking at a bird perched on the limb overhanging the river then by quickly viewing my copy of Simpson & Day, that the bird was a female Darter. I know that Danielle had a wonderful experience on the walk and she was all smiles at the end, along with her family.

The second highlight for me was the quick sighting of Swift Parrots (*Lathamus discolor*) on the ridge top at Pound Bend. **Swift Parrots are nationally endangered birds in Australia.**

I observed what appeared to be twelve of the Swift Parrots flying over during the guided walk. The sighting was confirmed on Tuesday with Chris Zaros from Birds Australia after hearing and a CD voice recording of the Parrots over the phone. The birds were located in the tops of flowering Manna Gum and flying along the riparian zone around Pound Bend.

In the final analysis. All participants, who made the effort to meet the morning sun, like the birds do every day, had a wonderful time.

Book Review

By Pat Coupar

The Blue Planet

The Blue Planet is the companion book to the BBC series of the same name, shown on ABC television last year. This though is not just a book of the series. It stands alone as detailed reference on the natural history of the world's oceans. As well as mouth-watering scenes of beaches and coastlines, the book is packed with stunning colour photographs of creatures most of us would never see in a zoo, aquarium or marine park, let alone in their natural habitat.

The book begins at the beginning with the evolution of the world's oceans 4.6 million years ago and explains the effect that the sun and moon and other forces of nature have on the planet. Chapters follow the basic theme of the television series, describing in turn the different regions, zones, depths and all the associated plants and animals.

There is a touch of CD Rom about the 'topic links' box listing various related topics and giving relevant page numbers, but it is quite useful for cross referencing.

With 384 pages, including over 400 colour photos, this large format (28cm x 25cm) book is heavy and not ideal for bedtime reading. I took it away on holiday and because I had the time – and some bad weather - became thoroughly immersed in the maps, diagrams, tables, words and photographs.

The Blue Planet is full of facts and figures. Some slightly obscure like "*more people are kicked to death by donkeys each year than are killed by sharks.*" Others are more scientific, such

as blue whales are "*the largest animals that have ever lived on Earth (twice the size of the biggest dinosaur). Their tongue alone weighs the same as an elephant. They require 1.5 million calories each day which they obtain from krill – small shrimp-like creatures.*"

I particularly like the scene-setting narrative that opens each chapter. This one introduces chapter one "*We swim, sail and surf in the sea. We build sand castles on the beach and stand on cliff-tops to let the wind blow through our hair. We ski on snow, fish from rivers and drink pure water from springs without a thought. We enjoy the warmth of summer and cold of winter. In short we take salt water, fresh water and the changing seasons for granted. But they are all products of the rotation of the Earth and its orbit around one particular star, the sun....*"

There are many excellent nature documentaries on television these days and for most there is a video, book and sometimes a CD available. When the eminent David Attenborough is both author and narrator (Life of Plants and Life of Birds), I have purchased both book and video. But I cannot afford that luxury too often! While the Blue Planet was narrated by Sir David, the book is written by Andrew Byatt, Alastair Fothergill and Martha Holmes. Although I missed a couple of episodes of the series, it was price that was the deciding factor on this occasion. The book was cheaper than the video set, but at \$60 in the ABC shop, still relatively expensive. I went away to think about it. I couldn't believe my luck on finding the same book in K-Mart selling for only \$35. An absolute bargain.

But even at its full price The Blue Planet is still a good buy. It is a great read and an excellent reference book for those with an interest in the oceans and seas that make up 70% of our planet.

Conservation 1710 Style

By Ray Clarke

In 1962, Llewellyn Lewis, one time owner of Kembla, Tills Road, Warrandyte, visited Northern Ireland to trace his maternal forebears, the Dobbins. He accumulated much history, including the following extract from an Indenture made 15th April, 1710, between the Earl of Antrim and Captain Thomas Dobbin. (regarding the lease of land).

Thomas had to enclose yearly two acres of land, plant quickset (sic.) or build double stone ditch 4 feet high to keep in good order with pain of forfeiting the lease, "and the said Thomas Dobbin shall plant in the most covemient (sic.) part of the premises for ten years the number of thirty trees annually of Ash, Oak, Sycamore or Elm and shall preserve in good order on pain of forfeiting four pence sterling yearly for each tree that shall not be planted."

Can you help spot Nationally Endangered Birds in the park?

Looking for Swift Parrots & Regent Honeyeaters has become my current obsession due to a recent observation of thirty Swift Parrots at Pound Bend near the carpark lookout above the Tunnel.

The Swift Parrot (*Lathamus discolor*) is a migratory species which breeds mainly in the Blue Gum forest of South east Tasmania and spends winter on the mainland Australia. In appearance and habit the Swift Parrot resembles lorikeets (especially the Musk Lorikeet). Swift Parrots are 25cm in length, with general green plumage. (*Grab a Bird field guide and have a look now*).

In Victoria, Swift Parrots occur in areas where there is a continuous supply of winter-flowing eucalypt bloom, feeding on the nectar of a few 'key' species such as Red Ironbark and at Pound Bend feeding on lerps (sugary shelters of small scale insects) on the leaves of Manna Gums. The Warrandyte State Park riparian zone along the Yarra River is an important winter food resource for the Swift Parrot. Recent survey in Australia

has shown parrots may number less than 1000 pairs, and as such the species is classified as endangered in Australia.

The Regent Honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*) is a 20cm brilliant black and yellow honeyeater a little larger than the local New-Holland Honeyeater. An extremely active bird of the upper canopy they are highly mobile bird species and occur mainly in Box Ironbark forests between Chiltern in Northern Victoria and ranging to north of Armidale in NSW. Recent surveys of this species show the bird species is critically endangered in Australia with the honeyeaters falling perhaps lower than 1000 birds. The main threat of the Regent Honeyeater is reduction and declining quality of habitat.

We need to try and locate both these species over the next 4 months. So the challenge is on! David Farrar (Frankie) will be conducting the first survey for the Swift Parrot and the Regent Honeyeater on Saturday 25 May 02. Do join me if you can. Phone David Farrar (Frankie) for more information on 9844 2659.

Would you like to help in Owl Survey for Warrandyte State Park?

Powerful Owl surveys will start on **Tuesday 4 June**. David Farrar (Frankie) will be surveying during the first two to three hours after sunset at known roost sites in the Warrandyte State Park for Powerful Owl activity over the next few months.

Note: This is not a large group activity and the group will be kept small. If you have an interest in owls give Frankie a call at the park. on 9844 2659.

Help Search for the Majestic Brush-tailed Phascogale

The next formal survey of nest boxes for Brush-tailed Phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*) in Warrandyte State Park as a Friends activity is on **Thursday 23 May 2002**. This is during the breeding season and I will be looking for a small team of four to six to conduct the survey, which will take half the day. A survey will also be conducted on *Thursday 6 February 2003* during juvenile dispersal.

If you are interested phone David Farrar (Frankie) on 9844 2659 to be placed on a list.

Correction: to I Spy April 2002 issue

Farrar and Fauna

The article explained that David Farrar could add Fauna information into a computer system and that previously the information was hand written into a book at the front desk. That information should still be written into the Fauna information/sightings book and then David Farrar can load information into the Parks Victorias Environmental Information System (EIS) when the time permits. However any fauna sightings considered important can still be phoned (9844 2659) into David Farrar (Frankie) and he will input the fauna data straight away.



By B.G

Heritage Holus-Bolus

“Thomas Austin, squatter and later settler is renowned for the introduction of rabbits into Victoria while his wife Elizabeth is known as the founder of the Austin Hospital. Their home, Barwon Park, is a majestic 42 room bluestone mansion and stables”

“Other treasures includestunning tapestry, the family silver tea service and silver cutlery.”

Source: Trust News, April 2002.

Further Friends

Robyn Adler who has been helping since early April wants to learn more about native plants to help in revegetating her parents place at Jumping Creek.

Julie Bishop has a brush-tailed possum around home with two young, one on the back, the other in the pouch.

Vernier Verification

Seen very early Saturday morning in April, Ranger, David Farrar, fully uniformed, purchasing vernier calipers and various other work-type impedimenta. It was at Bunnings and it will be used for “fauna activity.”

Green Corps Constituant 1

Emma Lennox is currently with Green Corps at the Park. Emma, 19, was previously at Assumption College (Kilmore) then worked for her father as a receptionist at Thomastown.

She has been to a two month summer camp in Massachusetts, USA working with children aged up to 14.

Green Corps Constituant 2

Hugh McGregor was previously at Kew High School and had worked part time with a butcher for two years. He is a vegetarian and wants to be a Park Ranger or Wildlife Officer in the future.

Hugh is 17 has completed ‘Venturer’ training and enjoys hiking, rock climbing and bird watching. He has deferred his Charles Sturt University course (Parks, Recreation and

Heritage) for one year. Hugh has lived in every State in Australia except South Australia.

Water Wise

A new 500 litre (110 gallon) squat plastic Polymaster water tank has been installed at the ‘Folly’ building. Colour – River Gum green.

Spent Cartridges

David Potts, visiting to purchase plants, recalled that in the Blue-Tongue-Bend/Osborne Road environs, children used to collect the spent 303 cartridge cases from the Air Force Depot used for shooting training – baak in World War Two times.

Green Corps Gardner

The Green Corps group is being led by Mark Gardner. Green Corps is a traineeship which involves 134 hours for a certificate 2 in Australian Land Conservation and Restoration.

May Mash

And how did our nursery manager fare for food on May Day? An evening meal of sausages, brown onion sauce, mashed potatoes, peas and pumpkin. Now you know.

P.P

Re Geoff and Lee Speedy’s ‘P’ party last month. They went as Pink & Purple and a Plumber.

Frog Focus

Melbourne Water conducted its first time frog survey with the Amphibian Research Centre. 70 sites were visited. “Frogs found in the Yarra Valley and Maroondah include: Common Froglet, Victorian Smooth Froglet, Growling Grass Frog, Southern Brown Tree-frog, Whistling Tree-frog, Peron’s Tree-frog, Pobble-bonk, Spotted Marsh Frog, Striped Marsh Frog and Southern Toadlet.

Source: The ‘Journal’ newspaper, Tuesday April 30th.

I Spy continued on next page



I Spy continued

Scaring Scar

The re-alignment of the Big Creek Road at Starling Gap, last year endangered Leadbeater's Possum habitat. Also 3-4 km of walking track leading towards the site of the Ada number two mill had been modified by bulldozer and any traces of three trestle timber bridges ... and any other relics of the old timber industry in its (the bulldozer) track have been destroyed.

Source: a recent letter to the Press by Bob Lillie of the Upper Yarra Conservation Society.

Write Right

The treasurer can still get his sums right in his 88th year.

Rifle Range Reserve

30 people attended this activity with Ranger, Cam Beardsell. Pittosporum pullingm orientation and *Senecio* planting were all part of an enjoyable day.

May Market Matters

On duty were were: Alan Woodcock, John Hanson, Neal Tessier, Betty Oke, Marie Krause, Ben Gotlib. There were queries about killing ivy ("trunk as thick as your arm"); "Where do Myrtle Wattles grow in the Park?"; "Why are Cootamundra weeds?" Various donations were made for plants. Messages were left re "missing members" and Park Office laminator.

Empty tubes were returned to us.

"FOSCCers" Find Life in Stony Creek!

By Steve Munro

At their second meeting, on Sunday 28 April, the Friends of Stony Creek Catchment (FOSCCers) investigated the condition of the higher reaches of Stony Creek. Assisted by Sarah Eggleton from Water Watch, the dozen assembled FOSCCers tested the condition of Stony Creek water at the retaining wall just below Chase Reserve.

The tests revealed mostly good news: the PH level and dissolved oxygen content were both within acceptable ranges; the water was clear; salinity level was a little high, but well short of a level that would cause concern.

Netting of water samples showed a good variety of aquatic life: many boatmen and other water beetles, several shrimps, assorted larvae, dragonfly nymphs, and, best of all, a native Galaxid fish, about 8-10cm long.

Not all was idyllic though. The team dragged from the Creek a long-abandoned office chair.



Weeds are also encroaching around the Creek, but thankfully not as bad as the weed infestations further downstream.

Photos from the early 90's were available, and showed that reeds are now relatively

more abundant, as are blackberries. The group is keen to continue water testing periodically so as to maintain a long-term data record for the area.

It was good once again to see a group of residents from different parts of the Stony Creek area united in the common purpose of improving the local environment.

The next meeting of FOSCC (last Sunday in June) is likely to concentrate on weeding along the Creek banks, and/or a walk in the Chase. Any FOWSP members living in the area will be welcome. Thanks again to Josephine Lee for organising FOSCC.

Attention

Would the member who paid a subscription of \$15 during the Warrandyte Festival and who has not received a receipt, please phone Lee Speedy on 9437 0894



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Eastern Yellow Robin
(Eopsaltria australis)



This friendly little grey bird with its bright yellow breast is often encountered in the bush perched on a low branch or tree trunk. It feeds on insects obtained on the ground or in the foliage. Unlike the migratory scarlet, flame, pink and rose robins which visit Warrandyte during the cooler months this species is a resident.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

- Family \$20
- Single \$15
- Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

Special Membership Offer

Receive a discount if you renew your membership for three years

Single: \$40.00

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