

November 2002

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Impromptu Planting Success

By Pat Coupar

Adaptability is the key to success. When it comes to looking after the local environment FOWSP can turn their hands to most things. Whenever and wherever necessary.

A few Thursdays ago, while the group were happily entrenched around the propagating tables, the call went out for some volunteers to do some planting at Pound Bend. Immediately half a dozen or so people offered their labour.

The site for the planting was close at hand: passed the office beyond the work sheds, down the hill and around the corner to the old orchard.

Although getting rather late for a revegetation planting in this dry year, it was not quite too late as the site is a damp gully colloquially known as 'Buttercup Gully'. A pretty name, but not a pretty place. Unfortunately the 'buttercup' does not refer to one of the native species, but to the aggressive introduced Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) – a serious environmental weed that until recently filled the gully. However, following intensive weed control this species has all but been eradicated from the base of the gully.

This site is just a small part of Ranger Glen Jameson's Biolink Project and Glen was there to oversee the planting and guarding operations.

Species chosen were Tall Sedge (*Carex appressa*) to complement the clumps already growing at the head of the gully and Common Tussock Grass (*Poa labillardierei*) which is also present close by.

While most of our non-propagating alternative Thursday activities are advertised in

advance, this turned out to be a spur of the moment planting. It was seen as a last opportunity

to get the plants in before it became too dry and before other weeds moved in. Luckily our nursery manager just happened to have a few boxes of the required species just ready to go in the ground.

Being so close to the nursery this will be an easy location for members to keep an eye on the plantings over Summer. With indigenous plants now occupying the gully the weeds should find it more difficult to re-establish.

When and if the rains come in Autumn we can look forward to a further planting. Next time adding some diversity to site, maybe even establishing some of our native buttercups which are becoming increasingly rare in the region.

So thank you to those hard working Fowspians who toil at tables to produce such good-looking plants. And a special thank you to the planters who dropped everything in order to get the plants in the ground when it was most needed.



Creeping Buttercup
(*Ranunculus repens*)

'Burgan, Bellbirds and Eucalypt Dieback'

A Land for Wildlife Field Day

The Summary

Following the Field Day a letter was sent to all those who attended from Kate Mackie, Land for Wildlife Extension Officer Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), Keith Turnbull Research Institute. It highlights all the major points and has been reproduced here as a summary of those issues discussed.

Thank you for attending the field day held on May 25th at the Hubbert property in Kangaroo Ground. The issues discussed were quite complicated, and I have had some queries arising as a result of the event. I would therefore like to reiterate some of the points made by our guest speakers.

1. Eucalypt dieback is a very complex process, there are various known contributing factors, and in many cases a combination of these will be involved. Some of these include pathogens such as Cinnamon Fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*), changes in the local hydrology, altered nutrient regimes (e.g. septic run-off), loss of 'ecological companions' (especially indigenous understorey species), natural events such as drought, and infestation by insects. **It is important not to jump to**

conclusions about the causes of tree health decline, but to observe closely and intervene only cautiously.

2. While Bell Miners can contribute to Eucalypt dieback by 'protecting' sap-sucking lerps, they are a native species of relatively restricted range and need to be respected as such. At a big picture level, management of this problem needs to include addressing habitat fragmentation, which favours the success of this species at the expense of many others.

3. Although partial clearing of understorey was suggested as a way to evict Bell Miners from an area, this decision must be made with due consideration to the negative impacts that understorey removal can have on an environment. In addition it must be remembered that **a permit is required to clear native vegetation.**

4. Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) is a plant that can easily form a virtual monoculture in a disturbed environment, although in many situations it exists as a natural part of the ecosystem and poses no threat to other species. In other cases it may be appropriate to thin or clear it, but such a decision should be made carefully, with input from qualified persons. **Again a permit is required to thin or clear it.**

5. Burgan has many benefits, dense thickets of it can prevent the incursion of environmental weeds, and provide good habitat for many species of fungi and orchids. In addition many native bird species use it as habitat.



Burgan, Bellbirds
and
Eucalypt Dieback

Fauna Survey

Conducted in Warrandyte State Park: Blue-Tongue Bend and Stane Brae

16, 17, & 18 October 2002

Report By Ranger David Farrar (Frankie)

I was contacted by Richard Francis a Wildlife Lecturer from RMIT University Melbourne, to see if the University could be involved with a range of conservation and land management practices in the Warrandyte State Park. Their particular interest was in fauna survey.

I was involved in coordinating fourteen students with Richard in a fauna survey at two sites in the Park.

The first site was at BlueTongue Bend in Jumping Ck Reserve which was chosen because of intact vegetation community and good habitat. The second was at Stane Brae, chosen because it has a vegetation community under going rehabilitation and displays less understorey protective habitat for small mammals and other fauna.

Trapping techniques included the use of pit fall lines, which are set on transect lines along the ground with 20 litre buckets buried every 10 metres at ground level. A low fence is established over the buckets to guide fauna, along the fence and into the buried buckets. This is a good technique for trapping various species, including reptiles, amphibians, mammals and arthropods.

We also utilised 58 Elliot traps. These are collapsible sheet metal, designed traps for small mammals, and made in Upway Victoria. And 20 small cage traps were also used. The total amounted to 78 traps and two pit fall lines. We established 1 pit fall line and 20 traps at Stane Brae and 1 pit fall line and 58 traps at BlueTongue Bend.

All cage and Elliot Traps were set for two nights and pit fall lines set for three nights. Traps were baited with rolled oats, peanut butter and honey was added. Pit falls were not baited.

Results at BlueTongue Bend: After the first night 6 Bush Rats (*Rattus fuscipes*), all male and of varying colour range, were trapped in Elliot traps. The mammals were weighed, sexed and measured for positive identification. One Jacky Lizard (*Amphibolurus murricatus*) was detected in a bucket along the pitfall line. Also observed were insects and spiders.

After the second night 3 Bush Rats were trapped in Elliot traps and 1 Antechinus (*Antechinus agilis*) was trapped with 8 young attached to a nipple rather than inclosed in a pouch. The pitfall line only showed ants beetles and few more spider species in the buckets.

Results at Stane Brae: Over the two nights were as expected. Due to modified biodiversity in the vegetation community, showing less protective habitat only one Common Frogglet (*Crinia signifera*) was trapped in the pitfall line and no small mammals trapped only insects, including beetles, caterpillars, ants and spiders.

We packed up the Elliot traps and the cages after two days and left the pitfall line out for a third night. This was a good call because we trapped another Jacky Lizard, a large Trapdoor Spider measuring 22mm in length and luckily, another Antechinus (*Antechinus agilis*) with 8 young attached again. Woo oh!

RMIT University also completed an aquatic survey of the Yarra River at Stane Brae below the dairy site. I am still waiting on the full report from RMIT and will add this to a future article. However I can tell you that many aquatic insects were observed, a Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) was seen on dusk and a Spiny Cray (*Eutastacus yarranesis*) was trapped in a drop pot. Carp (*Cyprinus carpo*) and Australian Smelt (*Retropinna semoni*) were seen under spotlight and captured to observe.



'Frankie's' Fauna news

We will be conducting other fauna surveys when time permits, probably after this Fire season. Which is from now on until the end of April 2003. If you are interested in helping out with fauna survey activities please let me know. I am actually after at least two Friends Group members that have a strong interest in Fauna to help me conduct fauna surveys and help me coordinate other fauna activities.

Book Review

By Joan Broadberry

GREEN OVER GOLD

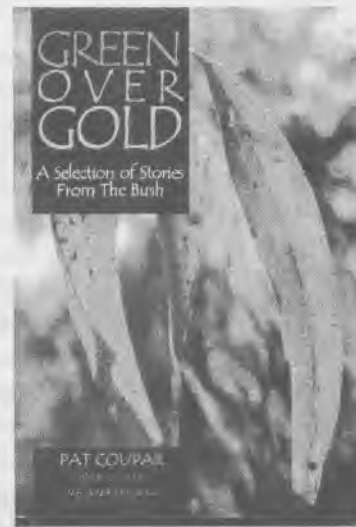
By Pat Coupar

A book that has greatly influenced me is *Gum leaves and Geckoes* by Alan Reid. It is a diary, listing and illustrating the cycle of nature in south-eastern Australia. About fifteen years ago, with the help of this small volume, I started to learn my natural history. It opened eyes that now seem to me to have been blind. Because of this book I started my own nature diary, and I am currently up to number fourteen. I also became fascinated by the concept of seasonality, particularly in my local area.

No wonder I was delighted to come across another book built around the same framework. It is called *Green Over Gold*, by Pat Coupar. Her book is in fact a selection of short pieces first written for the 'Warrandyte Diary'. Each piece of writing is illustrated with a beautiful line drawing by her daughter Melanie. Not living in Warrandyte, I have never had the pleasure of reading "The Diary", so the stories were quite new to me.

However this is not just a collection of newspaper columns, but a cleverly crafted work in its own right. *Green Over Gold* has as its unifying theme a gradual movement through a Warrandyte year from January to December. For the beginning of each month Pat has carefully chosen a list of natural history observations to place the reader in the season. She has then presented four stories per month. Many of them are intimately linked to the time of year. For example, April's 'Master Weavers' is an account of the magical way spider webs become visible, on a cool, dewy April morning.

As I read I kept finding fascinating details. The fantail cuckoo actually picks up its own egg in its beak and deposits it in another bird's nest. The wombat's brain is proportionately larger than any other marsupial. What a lot there is to learn.



My favourites stories are 'Tidal Zone' and 'Koala Quest'. Many of us have walked the remnants of bush in suburbia and, like Pat, dreamed of what it might have been like before weeds and development. I

also loved the vignette of the intrepid Japanese girl taking the bus to Warrandyte in the hope of seeing a koala in the wild.

Pat has put a large part of herself into the book. Her English and nursing background; her family; her love of Warrandyte; her special interest in caterpillars, moths and butterflies: all come through vividly in the stories. Most of all I came away from the book in awe of her ability to share her acute observations and present scientific information simply, and of her gift of writing beautifully.

Do your soul a favour in these troubled times. Dip into *Green Over Gold* for your holiday reading. Pop it in your partner's Christmas stocking. Buy it for homesick Australians overseas. My Christmas present to myself will be to somehow get hold of back copies of the 'Warrandyte Diary' and catch up on all those other wonderful columns I've missed.

The book is available from the FOWSP trailer at the monthly Warrandyte market and the following local outlets: Post Office, Bakery Cottage Bookshop, Australian Aspect and the Warrandyte Newsagency. Or you can contact Pat direct on 0438 984 229.

Note: Pat & Melanie will be signing copies of their book at the FOWSP trailer at the pre-Christmas Warrandyte market on Saturday December 7th

'Frankie's' Fauna news continued.

Koala Count Saturday 16th November 2002. I require a few volunteers to help with the count at Pound Bend this year. Please let me know if you are interested and I will add you to the list.

Thursday 28th November 2002 Brush-tailed Phascogale Nest box survey. An inspection of nest boxes will be carried out during the day to see how nesting female Brush-tailed Phascogales are going.

Starting at 10:00am. Meet at Park office and you must register with me as I can only manage up to 8 people on the day. (Note this activity may be cancelled due to WildFire Management activities).

Please give me a call if you have any interest in activities or see any interesting fauna observations.



By B.G

To Raq and Ruin

Will Rangers be trained in anti-terrorist procedures? E.g.

- Paralysing pittosporum
- Investigating ivy infiltration
- Deciphering Patterson's curse
- Obliterating angled onion
- Monitoring mountain bikes
- Chlorine bunkering

Market Matters

Helping at the market stall early October were, amongst others, Michael Hubbert and Antje Bauer.

Stall Site

Committee member, Geoff Speedy has been negotiating for a new stall site at the Warrandyte monthly market. "Near the pond" has been mentioned as a possibility.

Serious Survey

Will politicians soon be asked for their Park plant preferences? This column will try. Watch the next newsletters for election selections.

Sunday Session

The Friends activity on Sunday 6th October attracted helpers, plant acquiring people and others. When asked why they came, responses were: "It's the only day I can get here to help" and "Josh told me I had to."

Patrick Curry (aged 6) was seen building a miniature Fourth Hill near the potting mix pile.

Amir (from Bosnia) and Tanya (from Croatia) came to report a 'strange building and candles near the river at Longridge.' And Claire Babic arrived wearing her Parks Victoria Volunteer hat.

Greenhood Garnish

Ranger Cam Beardsell recently found a small population of the rare *Pterostylis foliata* at The Common. On the same day, also at The Common, Pat and Mike Coupar found only the second population for WSP of *Geranium solanderi* – a VROT (Very Rare Or Threatened) species.

Ten Ten Ten

On the 10th of October Pat led a group of 10 people down the (ex) weedy gully near 'Endeavour Bank' near the Depot, near the Yarra River at Pound Bend.

Ashleigh from Adelaide

The same day Ashleigh Scott (aged 10) and Chris Scott (11) were helping prick out *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* at the nursery. Amongst other volunteers helping was Kay Williams who worked at the Park Office until recently.

Various Volunteers

Volunteers from Conservation Volunteer Australia were at the Park on Sunday October 6th. Led by Mark Gardener they were pricking out Casuarinas and removing plant guards from near 'Endeavour Bank.'

McQuade Mix Up

Bruce McQuade used to work at the Parliament House garden (Vic.), not at Government House as reported last month.

Staggered Service

Six Project Fire Fighters (PFF's) will be staggered in starting at WSP late October. Con Cosmas, leading hand has already commenced.

Severely Startled

Just as Ranger Brian Phefley 'leant' on one of the nursery sprinklers, the timer started up with a burst of water. Brian blanched!

Parks People

Seen on October 24th attending a meeting at the Depot were Mary Lou Dixon (Chief Ranger) and Alysia Brandenburg (Regional Marketing Officer). Andy Nixon (Ranger-in-Charge) was also seen.

Population Poser

Social researcher Hugh MacKay recently asked, "Will smaller households create more loneliness, isolation, alienation and depression?" "Yes" was his answer.

Source: Royal Auto, Oct 2002 Article entitled 'We are what we drive.'

I-Spy continued on next page

I-Spy continued

Tiny Trigger Plant

Josh, our nursery manager, obtained some of these. They are only 12mm high with a flower the size of a pinhead, unlike the local Grass Trigger Plant which may grow to 600mm.

Both species possess an irritable column-like structure that when triggered by an insect (or prurient humans) rapidly rotates up and deposits or removes pollen from the insects back. Young flowers donate pollen, old flowers receive it.

There are 184 species occurring in Australia.

Source: *Australian Plant Society Maroondah Ltd, newsletter Oct 2002.*

Best Pest Plant Process

Warrandyte State Park has received several compliments from various knowledgeable sources about their 'pest plant program' being carried out. This includes mapping of weeds location and type using the latest GPS techniques.

Promontory Prominent

Next year an International Ranger Conference will be held at Wilson's Promontory NP. A couple of our Rangers will be attending.

Marvellous Myotis

By Flora Anderson

The most outstanding thing for me, from the Ranger's Report at the last committee meeting, was that David Farrar was so delighted to be able to tell us that in one of the WSP mines he had seen *Myotis adversus*, the Large-footed Mouse-eared Bat.

This information sent me to my reference library for more details.

The Complete Book of Australian Mammals tells me that the unusual social behaviour and foraging adaptations make the L-f M-e Bat one of Australia's most interesting vespertilionids. It is the only species of *Myotis* found in Australia.



Archaeological Activity

An archaeological survey will be undertaken at WSP in relation to indigenous sites.

Fire Fighter Footnotes

- 1) Three fire fighters from Westerfolds and one from WSP have already attended fires at Coffs Harbour NSW.
- 2) Three fire fighters start at WSP on 4th November, two more will start in early December.

Market Move

Marjan Kiewiet and Alan Woolcock and Josh Revell and Daniel Matthysen were all helping 'man' the Friends trailer on the first day of its new market position. Also present were Neal Tessier and Betty Oke, then Anne Warren turned up on time and Marie Krause.

Thanks to all helpers for volunteering their time.



Within each breeding colony each male establishes a territory, excludes other males (the scars on ears of older males tell story) and forms a harem off females during breeding times. In Victoria females have only one young each year, usually in November or December.

Colonies never occur far from streams, lakes or reservoirs. Swooping over the water these bats rake the surface with the claws of their large feet to catch aquatic insects. They may forage individually or hunt together over the water or in the air and sometimes can be seen in downward spiralling flight as they search for flying insects.

All known information will be used by Parks Victoria to devise a management plan to protect the habitat of these lovely creatures.

Strength in Numbers

A couple of months ago we promised to give you details on how to join the VNPA – the Victorian National Parks Association – our ‘umbrella’ organization. There are four options:

- 1) mail: 10 Parliament Place, East Melbourne, 3002.
- 2) phone: 9650 8296
- 3) fax: 9654 6843
- 4) e-mail vnpa@vnpa.org.au

Joining fees are reasonable (if you compare to a trolley load of groceries from your favourite



supermarket!). Household \$55, concession \$30 and individual \$45.

For this you receive Parkwatch magazine four times a year, a monthly newsletter (‘Update’), access to an enormous number of popular walks and camps around Victoria and the opportunity to be part of a magnificent process of expanding habitat protection.

The success of the recent Victorian marine reserves campaign was in part due to the tenacity and scrupulous attention to detail of the VNPA.

Here’s a relevant quote from the late Graham Pizzey (talented ornithologist who died a year ago.)
“In an ugly world, a National Park system is one of the beautiful things we can do”

FOWSP Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Date & Time: Tuesday December 3rd 6.30pm for BBQ. 7.30pm for AGM

Place: Sandy Bay picnic area, Jumping Ck Reserve, Jumping Ck Rd, Warrandyte (Melway ref. 24A9)

BYO meat & drink for BBQ and a plate to share

Items for discussion include:

- Logo for FOWSP signs
- Suggestions for grants
- Sunday Propagation
- Thursday activities
- Reprinting of ‘Discover Warrandyte’

This is an opportunity for all members to have their say on the running of the group and the management of various issues that have arisen throughout the year.

It is important to have input from as many members as possible.

It is also a good excuse for a BBQ and a social get together in the great surroundings of our Park.

There is a rumour that we may even launch our two new canoes!

Fascinating Facts

The Relic Chloroplast of Malaria Parasite

Malaria is a major global health problem. The World Health Organization estimates that 500 million are infected and 3 million people die each year. There is currently no vaccine and the parasite is now resistant to our existing drugs.

Dr. Hamilton’s research has recently revealed that the malaria parasite was originally a plant-like organism that survived by photosynthesis. Major genetic traces of a plant-like metabolism has been found.

This tells that the parasite moved from its life in the ocean to a new way of life eating the blood in our veins. Importantly, this revelation offers new ways to combat the disease using drugs and herbicides initially designed to kill plants. It has been found that these herbicidal compounds, some of which are non-toxic to humans, work against malaria too.

Source: *The Royal Society of Victoria Newsletter*



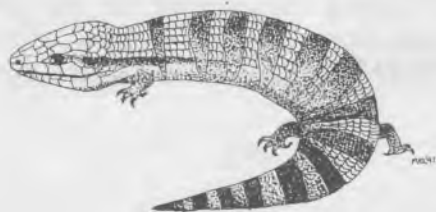
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Common (Eastern or Northern) Bluetongue Lizard (*Tiliqua scincoides*)



Commonly seen in bushland and gardens around Warrandyte especially at this time of the year. Bluetongues have a varied diet, feeding on snails, slugs, insects, flowers, fruit and fungi.

They belong to the largest family of lizards – the skinks (Scincidae) and give birth to live young in early to late Summer.

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

Family: \$50.00

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