

December 2002

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

A Perfect Day in a Perfect Place

By Pat Coupar

It had been another perfect day. One of those brilliant, early summer, clear blue sky days. Not too hot. And it turned into a perfect evening for the twenty or so Fowspians who came together at Jumping Creek's Sandy Bay picnic area.

How lucky we are to have such a lovely place at our doorstep. To sit amongst towering Manna Gums in this tranquil riverside venue. At Sandy Bay there is a large informal car park, picnic tables and seats, a shelter, toilets and barbeques albeit a little uneven!

We were there for an end of year social barbeque but this was only a prelude to the main event – our Annual General Meeting. We had been over optimistic in thinking that the eating, drinking and socialising would only last an hour. But the AGM has been advertised for 7.30pm and although it was hard, we had to turn our attention to more serious matters.

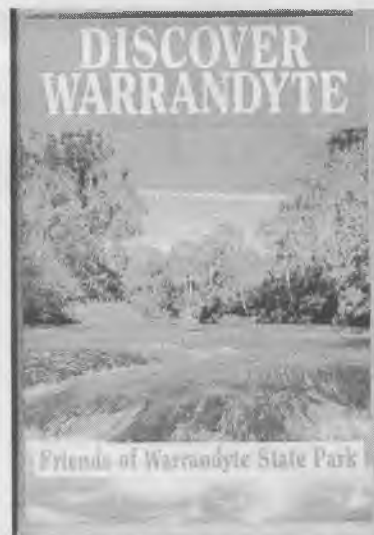
Sandy Bay is just one of the Park's idyllic locations. Another is Pound Bend Reserve with its huge grassy picnic area under eucalypts and koalas. This, along with Jumping Creek's Sandy Bay, is one of the Park's most popular places.

But there are others, less known and less visited. On a warm summer's evening there is nowhere better than Mullens Orchard at Black Flat, it may involve a bit of a walk in, but that just makes it more special. Further afield is Mount Lofty. Over recent years this latest addition has undergone some development with new tracks and picnic spots as well as an intensive revegetation project.

Warrandyte State Park is a jewel – a little tarnished by weeds and feral animals perhaps, but isn't that why most of us are its 'Friends'. Being a 'Friend' means being concerned about our local environment, preserving its flora and fauna and unique characteristics.

Our group grows plants to revegetate weedy paddocks, we grow rare species and plant them back into the bush, bringing them back from the brink extinction. We publish books, brochures, post cards and planting guides to educate others as to the importance and value of this natural resource.

FOWSP has built up a reputation over the years. Our expertise and enthusiasm is well known. And we should be proud of this. Next year we will be celebrating our 21st birthday and we will be sure to make it a very special occasion.



One of FOWSP's great achievements has been the production of our book 'Discover Warrandyte'. This will shortly be out of print.

Bikes on the Mountain

By Ranger Glen Jameson

We were carrying out a reconnaissance to find Aboriginal archaeological sites within Warrandyte State Park. We had acquired the AMG grid references to some sites that we didn't know existed and were using the Global Positioning System (GPS) to guide us to the locations.

One site we located was on the side of a hill with a superb view of the Warrandyte Gorge area, a meeting place of the Wurundjeri. Not only did we locate this site, but we also found the latest illegal -mountain -bike track. It went right through the centre of the site, neatly dissecting it with an almost metre wide track.

It was the third major track that we have found on Fourth Hill, which together with the many other minor runs made by mountain bike users constitute the major threat to the biodiversity in this section of the Park. Illegal track construction and their use by mountain bikes is currently the greatest risk to ecological integrity in this area which has a rich orchid species assemblage including some classified as rare or threatened in Victoria. Not to mention the damage to archaeological sites which are protected by both Commonwealth and Victorian laws.

Makers and users of these illegal tracks disturb more than the area they are riding on. They remove large amounts of rocks from the surrounding areas to create jumps destroying habitat over a wide area. Many small trees have been chopped down to line the tracks or raise the camber on the steep curves. The tracks destroy plants and mosses, cause soil compaction, change local hydrological patterns, nutrient flows and move great amounts of soils. The tracks will become barren strips of land for the next decade or so. Once we get some wet weather, the tracks will be serious erosion gutters and the disturbance to the sites will facilitate the transfer of weeds along the edge of the tracks.

The elaborate nature of the mountain bike tracks means that there has been a considerable amount of time spent on their construction. It also suggests that the track constructors have no regard for the law.

The current boom in mountain bike down hill riding has turned it into a very popular sport. The majority of recreational riders who are going off track may be just following others and possibly are not really aware of their impacts. It is

predominantly the downhill or extreme riders that are creating the problems. It has been further spurred on by the interest created by the Sydney Olympics and Internet sites advertising park locations including Warrandyte State Park as a track site. One of the driving concerns for the sport is that there are no official down hill courses close to urban populations. NRE has recently prepared a discussion paper on mountain biking on public land in Victoria "Mountain Bike Access to Public Land: A Review of Current Management & Issues which identifies that more needs to be done to plan for this increasingly popular activity.

One of the key messages for Parks Victoria in parks near Melbourne is that the popularity of mountain biking is going to increase and we need to be proactive in planning for its use whilst ensuring that areas of high conservation value are protected. For example' recently we have been looking at promoting locations such as Lysterfield Park in areas of lower conservation value. Reviews will look across the whole system of Parks across Melbourne and identify areas of lower conservation value, which can sustain planned mountain bike activity.

The tracks by their roughly built nature and steep undulating nature are extremely hazardous to ride upon and pose a serious risk to the rider should they fall from their bike. They are deliberately constructed that way because the nature of the sport includes thrill seeking in a natural environment. Damage to natural vegetation has occurred at several other urban - parks, most notably at Yarra Bend Park, where a Bicycle Users Committee was formed to deal with the problem. Our strategy needs to be several prongs- education on where to ride, proactive planning for alternative lower impact trails, enforcement as a last resort

It is legal to ride a bike on any of the vehicle management tracks throughout the Park, but illegal to ride off them. The rangers at Warrandyte State Park have undertaken a range of actions to halt the construction and illegal use of off-road tracks. These include increased Ranger patrols, signage, media releases and proactive approaches to cyclists in the area. The Park hopes to develop an integrated educational program targeting internet sites, cycle shops and riders to ensure usage by bike riders gets back on to appropriate vehicle management tracks.

For more information call the Parks Victoria Information Centre on 13 1963 or visit our website at <http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au>

Interesting Snippets

This month we have contributions from: Olive Walters, Margaret Dimech and Joan MacMahon.

Birds of a golf course flock together

By Olive Walters

When I first came to live in Melbourne I was influenced in my choice of golf course by the presence of many birds on the Rosanna Course.

The Club and Melbourne Water cleared the willows, hawthorn and blackberries along the banks of the Plenty River where it flows through the Course. This is a good thing in itself and has improved the flow of the river but the small birds such as Blue Wrens and Red-browed Finches seem to have disappeared.



However, I am still being surprised by bird sightings. Early this year I was astounded to see a Buff-banded Rail scratching in the mulch of a garden bed and on my return to the Club recently I was pleased to see a small flock of seven Common Bronzewing grazing where only Wood Ducks normally dare to take on the flying golf balls!

A bounty of birds and other animals

By Margaret Dimech

Wayne and I saw a Powerful Owl at the Koornong on 4th October, roosting in a tree next to the track only a 100 metres from the "no trucks past this point" sign.

Last Thurs (31/10) evening the Echidna returned to our place. One usually appears around this time of the year. And the Black Swamp Wallaby is a regular visitor after dark all year round.

The little bush birds are busy early in the morning and in the late afternoon from springtime on here. They visit our balcony to splash in the saucers of water under my pot plants, attracted by the mosquito larvae, no doubt. There are White-

eared Honeyeaters, Thornbills, Yellow Robins, Red-browed Firetails and others.

But I really love the return of the Grey Shrike Thrush, which is back visiting our home this week. One year, I was able to watch the parent bird teaching its fledgling to fly by calling it from one low bush to another, fending off predatory birds which arrived to harass them. That year they had nested under our high eaves somewhere, so I have never had the pleasure of seeing a nest up close in a pot plant as I have read about, but it was still wonderful.

We are so lucky in the bush, especially without pets around. But my brother's family in a very suburban block in North Ringwood have Spotted Pardalotes nesting in a pile of soil they had delivered to their front yard in the last few weeks, so there is wildlife to be seen even in less promising environments.

I look forward to reading this segment in future FOWSP newsletters. I love learning more about our flora and fauna from locals on the lookout so I hope you receive lots of contributions.

A koala in the house!

By Joan MacMahon

Woken from sleep at 2 am (!) Saturday the 7th by our youngest son yelling "there's a koala in the house". He wasn't dreaming either. There it was sitting in the entryway – we'd left the front door open. A big healthy looking specimen it was and once the light was turned off it moved outside and went around the garage – presumably trying to find the other koala which was calling from down by the river.



Reviews

By Pat Coupar

Short on time to look for those last minute Christmas presents? Why not give a friend a year's subscription to a magazine, journal or periodical. Here are three, each with a different slant, for anyone interested in the Australian environment. They all come out four times per year.

Nature Australia. (84 pages)

Magazine of the Australian Museum. Annual subscription \$36.00.

Printed on a wood-free paper produced using chlorine-free pulp.

Regular Segments: Backyard Naturalist; Rare and Endangered; Wild Things; Photoart; Secret Life of Plants and The Last Word.

Contributors include: Dr Steve Van Dyck, Senior Curator of Invertebrates at the Queensland Museum. Tim Low, Environmental Consultant and author. Tim Entwistle, Director of Plant Sciences at the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney.

Feature articles cover various aspects of flora and fauna including behaviour with reference to the latest research.

A good mix of short and medium length articles and great photos. If you have an interest in Australia's flora and fauna this magazine is a must.

Wild. (88 pages)

Australia's Wilderness Adventure Magazine. Annual subscription \$31.95.

Printed on Regent paper made of 40% waste that has been recycled and oxygen bleached.

Regular Segments: Green Pages; Equipment and Gear Surveys; Track notes; Wild Diary; Folio Feature articles on bushwalking; Skiing; Canoeing/Kayaking; Rock Climbing; Abseiling; Caving etc. A mix dominated by Australasian locations but including wild places in other parts of the world.

This magazine throws up a few surprises considering its target market. There is a strong philosophy on environmental conservation with particularly passionate emphasis on preserving our declining native forests and other wild places.

The thing with Wild is that you don't feel you have to go out and risk life and limb. It's enough just to read the articles ogle at the photos of inspirational places and dream.

Australian Geographic (128 pages)

Journal of the Australian Geographic Society. Annual subscription \$49.50.

Type of paper printed on – not stated

Regular Segments: Bush Telegraph; Members Mailbag; Corroboree; My Favourite Place

Feature articles cover a broad range of subjects including flora and fauna and people and places. As well it reports on scientific research and self-funded expeditions

Some of the articles can be a little long and sometimes it may be enough just to read the detailed captions to the photographs. But if you have plenty of time and like stories about Australia and its people, plus some beautiful colour photographs, drawings, maps etc then this journal fits the bill.

Reviews of recent publications are an important section in all three magazines. It is rare that they review the same books but if they do it's always good to get a second opinion.

News from the Nursery Manager

Community Sales: This year we have had a wider range of species available to the community, including some rare species. Overall, community sales have been up over 20%. Word of mouth is still our best advertising. The market stall also brings people in. The Warrandyte Diary paragraph has variable results, with between several and no enquiries per month.

Biolink: This year we grew 18,000 plants for the ongoing Biolink project. Nearly all were planted by Ongoing Corps, a few by FOWSP members on Thursday mornings.

Other Orders: Melbourne Water orders were down this year to approx. 500 plants. Most other orders came through local council grant schemes.

Thursday Activities: Nursery days averaged approximately 15 people over the year, the largest attendance being 29. The re-introduction of Ranger led activities on Thursday mornings once every 3 to 4 weeks were a success. These included fauna monitoring, planting and weeding. Longer day activities to northern reserves were particularly well attended and appreciated.

Sunday Activities: Sunday afternoons have been generally poorly attended, except for a very small core group of people.

Rare Species Program: The pilot rare plant program which operates with the assistance of Parks Victoria staff has continued successfully.

By Andy Nixon (Ranger-in-Charge)

Hello all – a little while since the last update. Believe me we haven't been idle waiting for something to happen, rather things have been happening causing us to be in 'high gear' dealing with many and varied issues.

An issue of late has been the prevalence of mountain bikes in the Park, particularly at Fourth Hill. Whilst cycling is permitted throughout the Park on vehicle tracks, the inappropriate presence of bikes off track is causing some significant damage. Various actions are being undertaken – have a peruse of the article in this issue by Glen Jameson.

Another issue at Fourth Hill is access to the old mine adits – Geraghtys, Johnsons, & Victory (Whipstick). A committee consisting of local staff and community representatives is assessing the security and safety issues at these sites. Heritage and natural values are important criteria being evaluated along with the safety factors. This is particularly so at Johnsons mine which provides a roosting site for protected bat species.

In the management of flora and fauna we continue a number of our annual programs. Threatened species management has seen a missing pair of Powerful Owls found with juvenile; the monitoring of Tuan populations continues – use of the FOWSP nest boxes is improving; new plant species – Slender greenhood *Pterostylis foliata*, (True) Austral Cranesbill *Geranium* sp, and Green Scent Bark *Eucalyptus fulgens* are all recent finds.

Extensive rabbit control work continues again this year in a number of locations. The involvement of you and your neighbours in the wider community program makes a major

contribution to the Park's well-being. Linked to this is other feral animal control work – cats and foxes. Last year we monitored a number of sites, and now this year we are following up with targeted programs.

For the third year our revegetation program continues. The plantings at Stane Brae (8,000) are most impressive for those that are yet to see them. Take a walk out there one evening in the coming months – it's a splendid sight. Most importantly will be the maintenance to these sites over the hot summer months to come. Water stress, grazing pressure from rabbits and 'roos means that we need to ensure stakes and guards remain in place. This means YOU can help. Many hands providing protective maintenance will mean a forest of healthy plants in 10 years time.

And tying all this work together is the new Park plan. The draft 'Warrandyte State Park Plan 2003' is ready for approval and following the election should soon be available for public comment. FOWSP had input into the development of the draft.

As FOWSPIAN's you have a nexus to the State Park (perhaps right at your back fence) but many of the staff's work activities are not just focused on Warrandyte State Park. The workcentre also has responsibility for : a number of conservation reserves through the Christmas Hills area up to the base of Kinglake NP, Sugarloaf Reservoir Park; assisting in wider district issues (from Yarra Bend Park to Plenty Gorge); fire management responsibilities in the Middle Yarra and Watsons Creek corridors, and working with other agencies on common land management issues – e.g. Community Rabbit Busters program. Any questions, thoughts or interest in visiting these other sites – do ask.

Have a pleasant and relaxing Christmas all. Be fire safe.

Fauna Survey Latest

By Julie Bishop

Recently Ranger David ('Frankie') Farrar, accompanied by five Fowspians, did a survey of nest boxes at Black Flat for Brush-tailed Phascogales (Tuans).

Unfortunately three boxes had been taken over by introduced bees. A local resident is known to keep bees and so it is likely that this may cause ongoing problems with the nest boxes.

However, we were lucky enough to see a Powerful Owl roosting. David told us that it has a fledgling, although we didn't see it.



A further inspection of the boxes revealed two with two Sugar Gliders in each. Another two boxes showed evidence of Phascogales use, with nests of bark and feathers and scats on the ground below one.

Although we didn't see any Phascogales on this occasion, it is very rewarding to know that they are using the boxes after such a short time.

Worth Repeating

Introduced Fish Species in our Waterways.

Since the 1800's Australia has had many exotic fish species introduced to its waterways. Some of them have been described below. Their effect on native fish populations has been detrimental, but also water quality does have a huge effect on the location of these native animals.

Carp - *Cyprinus carpio*



Carp is a native fish from Asia, from where it was spread by humans through Europe. It is now well established on all continents except Antarctica, and is the world's most widely distributed freshwater fish. Three strains were introduced to Australia - an ornamental strain was released near Sydney in 1850-60; a Singaporean strain was accidentally released in the Murrumbidgee area in 1876; and a third hybrid was imported for aquaculture in Victoria in 1961. Although this was banned, some fish escaped into Lake Hawthorn near Mildura, and these bred and spread up the Murray and Darling Rivers. Their spread was hastened in the 1970's by floods. These fish spread easily as their eggs stick to bird legs, so when they fly from one area to another the eggs are also transported. Carp have now recently been found in Tasmania, which is of

major concern. They are now undertaking studies to determine whether extermination or eradication is possible. Carp are a problem for native fish species as they disturb the bottom of the river, through feeding, making the water turbid. Australian native fish, especially Murray Cod need clear water for their eggs to develop as sediment on the egg's surface causes them to suffocate.

Mosquito Fish - *Gambusia holbrooki*

The mosquito fish is very widespread and common throughout NSW, South Australia and Victoria. It is native to the Gulf of Mexico. Because it reproduces rapidly (produces live young, not eggs) and has a reputation for eating mosquitos it has been introduced into many countries.

Introduction to Australia has been poorly documented, but it is thought it was originally bought to the country as an aquarium fish, later it was released by the government as a form of biological control of mosquitos. As it turns out, our native fish are a better control for mosquitos, and these introduced fish can survive very poor water quality, and eat macro-invertebrates, small tadpoles and fish eggs. They are an adaptable generalist predator.

The young take up to 3 to 4 weeks to develop and are produced through the warmer months, with broods numbering about 50 on average but may exceed 100, with 300 having been reported. Up to 9 broods are produced a year. They are easily misidentified as tadpoles by young children, and this has been thought to have increased the fishes distribution, as a child may remove it from one area and return to another.

As well as being a predator, these fish are taking up habitat and food supplies which our native fish rely on.

Source: NE Melbourne Waterwatch

Interesting Snippets Contd

Cat Kill

By Joan MacMahon

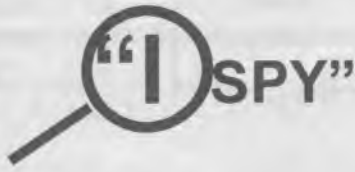
I was visiting a friend who lives in Research Rd, near the kindergarden, a few weeks ago. We'd had a nice time looking around her garden and scrambling down to look at an old and charming cubby. On the way back up to the house her cat appeared from some bushes with a freshly dead pardalote in it's mouth!

I've long known that cats kill wildlife but had never seen any evidence. I had it now - up close and fresh.

More Snippets Please

Please either drop your contributions into Joan's, at 101 Bradleys Lane (or via email at joanmacmahon@hotmail.com.) or Pat's at 143 Brackenbury St.

We would d love to be inundated with people's sightings/musings/anythings! Don't let the annual pre-Christmas madness interfere with your observations of the myriad of plants and animals out there.



By B.G

Serpent Sighted

On Friday 15th October 30 members of a Croydon walking 'ACROFFIMS' walked from Warrandyte to Pound Bend Tunnel, then along the river track to the Park Depot and lunched in that area.

They were going to look at the nursery, but Josh sighted an unexpected visitor – a brown snake – so the 'look' was cancelled whilst the serpent was being located to be relocated.



Speedy Steiner Set-up

The same day the FOWSP market trailer was being towed down Everard Drive, hurtling along at 20kph. Where was it headed? To the Rudolph Steiner School to set up a FOWSP display at the school fete.

Interview Interlude

9.30am, Thursday 21st November 2002. The 'Nursery Open' sign was already in place at the entrance to the Pound Bend picnic ground. The road to the depot had been swept, the trees tidied and stray leaves picked up. Why all the show? Our own nursery manager, Josh Revell, was being interviewed at the depot by two reporters, Michelle and Belinda, from the Manningham Leader newspaper.

Is Green Good Green?

An informed expert reports that Upper Yarra dam has a layer of green 'stuff' on the surface.

Members at Meeting

Tuesday 3rd November. The Annual General Meeting of FOWSP was held at Jumping Creek,

attended by over twenty people and three kookaburras on the fence.

As Geoff Speedy carted the 'Folly' chairs down to the shelter at JC, lurking on the plastic was a Perron's Tree Frog – a very large one. Yes he did get a fright, Geoff we mean.

Dark Deeds

The AGM started late and finished in the dark with minutes being written by torchlight. Unfortunately the expected canoes had not arrived due to a week's delay in delivery.

Perhaps more general amenity the AGM needs to return to a place where light and hot water etc are conveniently available.

Cathy's Crush

Somewhere unspecified Cathy Willis accidentally squashed some *Dianella tasmanica* berries onto her white shorts and white singlet top, staining them blue. If the colour doesn't come out Cathy suggested we reimburse her for her colour problem!

Jane's Jest

Jane Pammer has got behind in her FOWSP subscription. I thought it only happened to butchers who backed into their meat mincer.

AGM Accents

The Annual General Meeting heard and discussed items about FOWSP signs, potential joint ventures with Tertiary Institutions, FOWSP money reservoir, the possibility of a new book as 'Discover Warrandyte' runs out, and Andy Nixon's report. We also received the nursery manager's report but it was too dark to read it and Judy Green reported on our library situation. Another topic discussed was the need to ensure regular 'outings' from the depot led by appropriate people. The committee will look at this.

Viands and Victuals

Perhaps in future our Annual General Meeting should be held before we partake of victuals and viands.





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Agapanthus

(**Agapanthus praecox* subsp *orientalis*)

Mauve-blue flowers, white flowers arising from bright green leafy clumps decorate many Warrandyte gardens at this time of year. Agapanthus is lily from southern Africa. It's fleshy roots enable it to grow in most soils, in sun and shade and withstand drought.

Agapanthus is pretty and popular and a serious environmental weed.

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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