

February 2003

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

The Year Ahead

By Pat Coupar

Have you seen the nursery recently? Despite the drought, (we use tank water pumped from the river for watering), hot weather and lack of rain, it is brimming with plants at all stages of propagation. There are trays and trays of germinants soon to be pricked out, pots and pots of seedlings, and boxes and boxes of plants waiting for the autumn rains before they can go in the ground.

Most of the plants we grow are for revegetation purposes, like the Biolink project of the last two years where thousands of plants have gone in at Stane Brae and Pound Bend. But we also grow a number of rare and threatened species for the Park's 'species enrichment program'.

The importance of this program was highlighted recently by one of Warrandyte's rarest Spear Grasses (*Stipa semibarbata*), a critically endangered species in Warrandyte State Park and known only from a few plants near Timber Reserve. When they were discovered several years ago, a large wire guard was put around one of the larger tussocks, not long afterwards the unguarded plants disappeared (?rabbits). This year the guard is gone and there are no signs of the remaining plant. Fortunately a small amount of seed was collected from the plant in December 2000. This was stored for a couple of years (as many *Stipa* seed have a dormancy period) and sown just recently. To our delight we have 29 healthy new seedlings which will be treated like gold dust and eventually planted out into one of the Park's 'hot spot' areas

that are maintained and monitored for just such purposes.

This year there are several FOWSP planting days planned for the cooler and, hopefully, wetter months, both in Warrandyte and at the Northern Reserves. Some, like Whipstick Gully and Buttercup Gully (below the Pound Bend depot), are follow ups of last year's plantings. A recent inspection of both of these sites, planted out last year by willing Thursday Fowspians under the guidance of Ranger Glen Jameson, revealed an almost 100% success rate with very few deaths and generally healthy new growth.

Additional sites this year include the wetland area at Mount Lofty – known as Homestead Road swamp, the fern site and car park at Norman Reserve and Pound Bend Banksia Site, near the tunnel. All these areas are monitored regularly and have weeds controlled as necessary.

These planting mornings are to be programed for Thursdays, giving members a choice of the regular nursery propagation work or planting.

In the past there were very good attendances for the Sunday afternoon program of activities but several years ago numbers dwindled dramatically – despite Ranger presence and a free barbeque. If enough people express interest, we would certainly consider putting on a weekend planting day again.

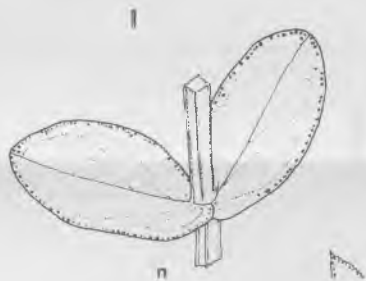
If members would like this to go ahead please send a brief note, including your preference for day (Sat./ Sun.) and time, to FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113 or e-mail Joan at joanmacmahon@hotmail.com.

Yellow Perils

Weeds are a constant threat to our dwindling native bushland. There are so many of them it's hard to know where to start and which ones to control. Some weeds have been around Warrandyte for many years and their impact, although serious, does not require urgent action. Among the weeds being targeted by rangers at Warrandyte State Park at present are three that are relatively new to the area - all have the potential to be a major problem if they were to spread. Two of them belong to the same genus, and all are classified as noxious and environmental weeds. By finding these weeds at an early stage of their infestation there is a real chance of eradicating them from Warrandyte or at the very least preventing them from becoming a serious threat to the Park.

The weeds are:

St Peter's Wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*)



A dense plant which grows up to 1 metre high with thin, light green, prominently veined, rounded leaves that clasp (ie. no stalks) the square stems. The 5-petalled, yellow flowers occur in crowded clusters at the end of branches.

The plant usually grows in damp mud in open sunny areas along the banks of river, creeks and swamps, but could also occur in moist pastures.

Only known from a few places in Victoria, including the Woori Yallock Creek, and more recently along Jumping Creek and the banks of the Yarra River at Warrandyte.

St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

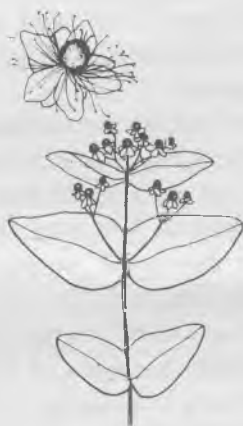
A perennial herb which grows up to 1.2 metres high. Stems grow from a central woody crown. Yellow flowers occur in clusters at the tips of branches. The plant will grow on drier sites than St Peter's Wort and Tutsan and it can be distinguished from them by its leaves which are longer and narrower.

In Warrandyte St John's Wort invades disturbed areas such as the slopes of Stane Brae and can also be found amongst native vegetation at Pound Bend.



Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*)

An erect shrub up to 1.5 metres high with distinctive reddish stems which emerge from a woody base (rootstock). The thin, pale green leaves, (longer and more pointed than St Peter's Wort) also have a reddish tinge and are stem claspings. The 5-petalled, yellow flowers have prominent stamens and are followed by globular fruit which, over summer, turn from green to red to black.



Found in damp shaded forested areas, along creeks and rivers and may encroach onto adjoining pastures. Known from many sites around the State - a particularly bad infestation occurs along the Howqua River near Mansfield. Only a few years ago this plant was relatively uncommon in Warrandyte, but recently Tutsan has exploded on the scene with infestations having been found in many places close to the river.

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)

An erect herb usually around 30-80 cms high. Starting out as a rosette of stalked wrinkled leaves, the plant develops one or more stems and the deeply divided dark green leaves become stalkless. The flowers, which occur in clusters at the ends of branches, are bright yellow typical daisy florets.

Occurs in southern Victoria generally on degraded land. Ragwort has not yet taken off in Warrandyte although infestations are common close by, however, occasional plants have been found growing in relatively weed-free bushland within the State Park.

It is vital that we control all these weeds before they take control of our precious bushland. You can help by keeping your eyes open for any of these weeds. If you think you may have seen any of these please notify the Park on 9844 2659.

Note: For more detailed descriptions and photographs of these weeds refer to 'Noxious Weeds of Australia' by Parsons and Cuthbertson which can be found in the FOWSP library.



Interesting Snippets

Reluctant Crustacean

By Pat Coupar

It was one of those scorching January Sundays when, in Warrandyte, the best place to be is down by the river.

And so it was that Mike and I made for one of our favourite swimming spots – exact location cannot be revealed!

A cooling dip in the silky water and out onto the broad flat rocks of the rapids. The view of river and bush in all directions reminiscent of more remote places. Always special. Always a treat.

The river was low, but one of the advantages of this is its relative clarity. And in the quiet pools at the edge of the rapids it was clear. I looked down into the ankle-deep water, there peeking out from under a rock millimetres away from my feet were a pair of large white claws. I froze.

Slowly a little more of the animal was revealed. Attached to the white claws - blue arms (or legs). Despite my silent patience nothing more appeared. In fact the crayfish retreated back under the solid rock. Breaking off a few strands of Juncus and pushing it under the rock, I tried to entice it out. The crayfish was having none of it. It grabbed the Juncus alright and held on with incredible strength but would not budge.

Cam Beardsell, guru of all things in the natural environment in and around this area, told me later that my reluctant crustacean was a White-clawed Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus woiwuru*) a rare species in Victoria.

He said that the spines on the crayfish's body help it lodge under rocks and prevent prey (and inquisitive Fowspians) from pulling it out.

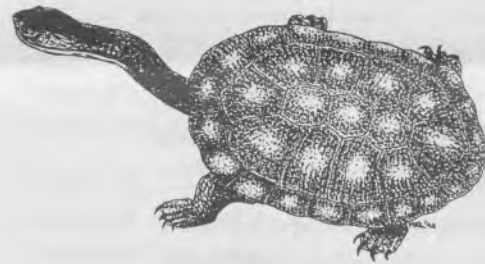
It didn't matter. I'd seen the claws and it was enough to know that this Crayfish is alive and well and living in Warrandyte's waters.

Creek Cruising

By Pat Coupar

Another warm blue-sky summer Sunday – morning this time. Three-quarters of the family were enjoying a bike ride along the tracks of Yarra Valley Parklands.

We had stopped for a break at the wooden lookout above the mouth of Mullum Creek. And there



below us, near the confluence, was an Eastern Snake-necked Turtle.

We had a great view of it's dinner plate-sized flat carapace, long neck and webbed toes. We watched the turtle for a while as it cruised the shallow gently flowing water in search of aquatic insects, frogs and snails.

Snake in the House

Last December Joan MacMahon told us about a koala that entered her house. Now she has had another intruder – a snake!

You can find out more about the encounter in next month's 'Interesting Snippets'.



More Please

There was very good response to the new segment "Interesting Snippets" when it was introduced towards the end of last year, but this has fallen off over the holiday. Please keep your sightings and observations coming in. Remember they don't have to be confined to the local area, we like to hear about flora and fauna from around the State, the Country and even the Globe!

Also members might like to comment on any new books they have received over Christmas and maybe make some suggestions for additions to the

FOWSP library. And don't forget the "My favourite locations" segments on road/beach/river or whatever or wherever are ongoing.

Contributions do not have to be long or perfectly written, drop us a line or two. Send by post to PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113 or via email at joanmacmahon@hotmail.com.

If anyone is interested in becoming a regular columnist for the FOWSP newsletter, perhaps one of our younger members looking for some experience, please ring Pat on 0438984229



A Federal State Partnership

The most important message that we can learn from water quality monitoring is that everything that happens in a catchment can have downstream effects, and that all communities both rural and urban within

each catchment must work together to correct problems.

Waterwatch Coordinators can help with your water quality monitoring needs, whether you are:

- An individual, school or community group
- A natural or man-made site

We can assist you to:

- Learn how to test water
- Learn what your tests mean
- Develop classes about water quality
- Develop actions to improve water quality

We have available for loan:

- Water quality testing equipment
- Water quality reference material

We can help you purchase

- Water quality testing equipment
- Waterwatch teaching materials
- Waterwatch merchandise

Interested in the Waterwatch program? Phone Sarah on 9499 8111

The Yarra has been a buzz with activity this Spring with many groups and schools monitoring for water quality.

Bend of Islands Conservation Association (BICA) have been continuing their sites along the Yarra and Watsons Creek in Kangaroo Ground. Their results show the river to be healthy.

BICA have been regularly testing the Yarra for a number of years now and able to test without a Waterwatch coordinator present. All monitors within the group are trained to use the kit and their results are forwarded to the Nillumbik Shire who then pass them onto me to enter into the database.



Counting Koalas

As part of the Warrandyte State Park summer program, a koala count was held on Wednesday January 15th at Pound Bend. This activity is always popular, especially with children, and this year was no exception. Booked out two weeks earlier, a maximum number of 30 people attended, around half of which were children. They were broken up into three groups each with a Parks Victoria leader.

Most of the likely koala habitat areas of Pound Bend were covered such as the Orchard, the Slashbreak and the Ridge. A total of 22 koalas were counted including one very young animal just out of the pouch. All looked healthy, despite the drought conditions.

FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

We meet for propagation and other nursery activities every Thursday morning at 10.00am at the Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10), unless otherwise stated below. When there is no scheduled afternoon activity we often go on a spontaneously organised walk. Propagation takes place from 10.00am to 12 midday followed by lunch. No prior experience necessary - there is always someone available to show you the ropes.

This activities list will be pinned on the noticeboard in the Folly.



FEBRUARY 6TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

FEBRUARY 13TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

FEBRUARY 20TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.

Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

FEBRUARY 27TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

MARCH 6TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

MARCH 13TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

MARCH 6TH Morning Activity

Fourth Hill with Cam Beardsell. Removing old guards and young woody weeds. Interested in the geology of Fourth Hill? Just ask Cam.

Either meet at the depot at 10.00am or at the end of Tunnel St, Warrandyte (Mel 35 F2) at 10.15am
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

Note: Informal walks or planting activities may be organised on propagation mornings

Next Warrandyte market is on Saturday March 1st



FOWSP Committee 2002

Flora Anderson 9722 1776 Public Officer
Pat Coupar 9844 1650 Newsletter Editor
Ray Clarke 9841 8507 Treasurer
Peter Curry 9844 0958 Secretary
Lee Speedy 9437 0894 Membership Secretary
Mike Coupar 9844 1650
Melanie Birtchnell 9870 1349
Karen Reynolds 9712 0797
Joan MacMahon 9844 3213

Wildlife Rescue
Julie Pryor 9722 1117

Market
Marie Krause 9712 0498

Park Office 9844 2659

Nursery Manager 0408800026

Plant Sales (By donation)

Dates

Thursday 6th Feb 10 00am-12md
Thursday 13th Feb 10 00am-12md
Thursday 20th Feb 10 00am-12md
Thursday 27th Feb 10 00am-12md
Sunday 2nd March 3.00pm-4.30pm

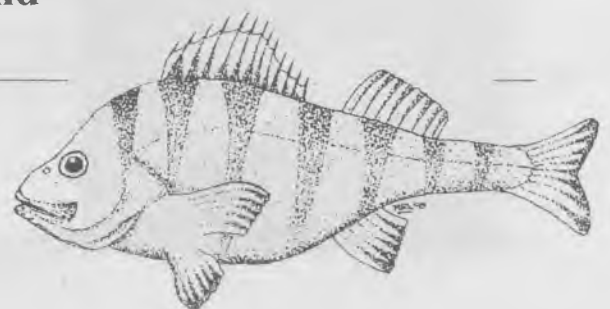
Thursday 6th March 10 00am-12md
Thursday 13th March 10 00am-12md
Thursday 20th March 10 00am-12md
Thursday 27th March 10 00am-12md
Thursday 3rd April 10 00am-12md
Sunday 6th April 3.00pm-4.30pm

Important Notice

Please note the nursery is only open for plant sales during the above times. Some members and non-members have been turning up for plants (and advice) outside these hours without prior arrangement. If you find it impossible to come during official opening times please contact the nursery manager first.

FOWSP Committee Meetings for 2003 will be held each month at 7:30pm on the Tuesday before the monthly Warrandyte market.

**Deadline for the March newsletter is
March 2nd**

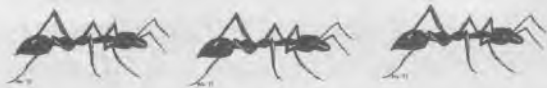


Worth Repeating

Super-colony of ants stretches 5000 kilometres across Europe

A super-colony of ants has been discovered stretching more than 5000 kilometres from the Italian Riviera along the coastline to north-west Spain. It's the largest cooperative unit recorded, according to Swiss, French and Danish scientists, whose findings appeared in yesterday's issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*.

The colony comprises billions of Argentine ants living in millions of nests that cooperate with one another. Normally, ants from different nests fight. But the researchers concluded that ants in the super-colony were all close enough



genetically to recognise one another, despite being from different nests with different queens.

Cooperating allows the colonies to develop at much higher densities than normally would occur, eliminating about 90 per cent of other types of ants that live near them, said Laurent Keller, of the University of Lausanne, Switzerland.

The Argentine ants were accidentally introduced to Europe about 1920, probably in ships carrying plants, Mr Keller said via e-mail. "It is interesting to see that introduction to a new habitat can change social organisation," Mr Keller said the Argentine ants' relocation to Europe. "In this case, this leads to the greatest cooperative unit ever discovered."



Source: *The Age* 18/4/02

Green Wedge Environmental Seminar Series 2003

Thursday, 6 February 2003 – "Insects, Spiders & Other Invertebrates: the Good the Bad and the Ugly"

Speaker – Dr. Alan Yen, invertebrate ecologist. After 20 years at the museum Alan is currently consulting on projects involving threatened species and biodiversity.

Thursday, 6 March 2003 – "Water Wise Gardening"

Speaker – John Patrick. ABC Gardening Australia presenter, landscape architect, author and former Burnley lecturer.

Thursday, 3 April – "Animals in Remnant Roadside Corridors"

Speaker – Kath Handasyde from Melbourne University.

Thursday, May 1 2003 – "The Vegetation Of Manningham's Green Wedge".

Speaker – Paul Foreman, Botanist with Manningham City Council, is also a qualified forester and has worked extensively throughout SE Australia in land management and conservation.

Thursday, 5 June 2003 – "The Long Term Flowering Patterns in Eucalyptus Trees"

Speaker – Melanie Birtchnell, PHD student and biologist with Greening Australia. Melanie's Honours year project also uncovered a fascinating social history of bee keepers.

Thursday, 3 July 2003 – "Platypus"

Speaker – Geoff Williams, Director of the Australian Platypus Conservancy, previously Director of Healesville Sanctuary.

Time: 7.30pm

Venue: The Function Room, Club Warrandyte (Warrandyte Pub)
120 Yarra Street, Warrandyte 3113 (Melways ref: 23 11E)

For further information contact about the seminars contact:

Cathy Willis – Conservation Officer. Ph: 9840 9122

Email: cathy.willis@manningham.vic.gov.au

Manningham
City Council

ENVIRONMENT
SEMINARS
2002





By B.G

December Doings

- Sighted on December 19th were two grade 5 groups from Anderson Ck Primary School all riding bicycles (hats on) around Pound Bend area.
The previous week another group of bike riders were travelling down to Pound Bend.
- Bernice Dowling, volunteer co-ordinator, was seen helping our members at the nursery. Just keeping in touch with 'grass roots' people.
- At least 12 of our 'All Brans' (i.e. regular helpers) worked on a day of extremely high humidity.

Temporary Tony

Tony Varcoe is Acting Chief Ranger for the Yarra area whilst Mary-Lou is elsewhere.

Historical Helper

Ken Crook, a local researcher (also in the Historical Society) was another new helper on Thursday.

Another Alias

There is a new organisation – the Department of Sustainability and Environment. But one Ranger

informs me Parks Victoria has been going for five years without a name change. Almost a record.

Conservation Cathy

One of our consistent long-time helpers, Cathy Willis, now has a full time job as a Conservation Officer with the City of Manningham.

Pricking out Practice

During one of 'yours truly's' appearances at the Park nursery, I experimented with pricking out plants with the others working there.

I learnt a couple of new basic techniques, such as removing excess root growth (cut with clean scissors) and dipping the remaining roots into a small bottle of water. This ensures the roots cling together and can be inserted neatly into a narrow deep hole in the potting mix without damage to the root system. And of course don't forget to water the seedlings in and apply a small amount of slug and snail pellets.

I hope this lot of seedlings survive, as the last ones I pricked out all died.

Grandmother's Giant

In the January 2003 'Gardening Australia', Melissa King – one of the 'stars' in the ABC gardening show refers to giant sunflowers and adds: "There is a long-standing competition in our family as to who can grow the tallest sunflower.....my grandmother holds the current family record of 4.5 metres. She has to stand on the shed roof to stake them!

And who is this grandmother? None other than our own Thursday helper Marion King.

Vacancy

The FOWSP committee has two vacancies for any members who would like to join the committee, even just for one year. You do not have to be an office bearer, but the addition of new people would be most welcome.

Committee meetings are held once a month with committee members taking turns to host the meetings. The meetings are quite informal and finish with a cup of tea or coffee and cake. It doesn't matter if you don't live in Warrandyte or do not wish to hold a meeting at your house.

If any members are interested in becoming a committee member, either ring a committee member (phone numbers on the loose middle page) or write to us at PO Box 220, Warrandyte.



River Clean Up

An afternoon has been organised, with Parks Victoria (PV) Ranger assistance, to collect rubbish from the river by canoe. This will be an opportunity to use our two new canoes purchased last year with Parks Victoria grant money. In addition to picking up rubbish, we will be mapping occurrences of certain weed species and rare plants along the way with our new GPS.

The Park has made available several other canoes, however numbers are limited unless you are able to BYO a canoe or kayak.

The section of river chosen for the clean up is from Stane Brae Beach (Jumping Ck) to Mullens Orchard (Black Flat) and some experience in canoeing is required for this activity.

When: Sunday March 16th at 1.00pm

Where: Meet at the Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10)

A BBQ will be provided at Black Flat following the clean up

As places are limited book quickly by phoning Pat on 043984229



Subscriptions for 2003 are now due

To renew your membership to FOWSP for the coming year please fill in the form below and send it to the secretary FOWSP, PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

Membership entitles you to one free plant a month from the market stall, 11 newsletters per year and the opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities including slide nights and excursions throughout the year.

Thank you for your support.



Name

Address

..... Tel. no.

Family \$20

Single \$15

Concession \$10

Special Membership Offer

Receive a discount if you renew your membership for three years

Single: \$40.00

Family: \$50.00



Surface
Mail
only

Postage
Paid

REGISTRATION BY AUSTRALIA POST
PP 346802 / 0005
If undeliverable please return to
Friends of Warrandyte State Park Inc.
P.O. Box 220
Warrandyte, 3113



Sweet Bursaria
(Bursaria spinosa)

White is the colour of several summer-flowering shrubs, such as Cassinias, Tree Everlasting, River Lomatia and the delicately scented Sweet Bursaria. Sweet Bursaria's dense clusters of nectar-rich flowers attract many insects on hot days, including a number of butterflies and beetles – look out for the stunning Jewel Beetles. The flowers are followed by flat, brown purse-like seed capsules in autumn.

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

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper