

March 2003

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Losers and Winners

By Pat Coupar

Finally on Friday February 21st it arrived. Rain. Too late for some and too little for others. Hopefully though it is just the start, for much, much more is needed over the following weeks and months for the drought to be broken. Nevertheless, it was most welcome and the hot humid weather that followed was enjoyably tropical.

Despite six years of below average rainfall, the majority of plants in the bush and in gardens have been hanging in there. Just. But it only took one day of excruciating 45 degree heat to push some of them over the edge. I came back from a two week holiday to find several well-established plants in my garden dead. It was the same in the bush.

Over summer of the slopes and ridges of Warrandyte's hills had been turning brown as they tend to do at this time of year. However, it was noticeable that species normally well adapted to the dry stony soils were dying.

From the river, while on a canoe trip, I saw the real effect of the drought on the riparian vegetation. High on some cliffs large patches of Burgan had died, while down at river level whole Muttonwood trees were also dead. Most Manna Gums seemed healthy, but some young trees were severely drought effected.

Some plants have suffered more than others. The losers include several wattles like Golden, Spreading, Gold-dust and in particular, Blackwood, and shrubs such as Dusty Miller, Hop Goodenia and Golden Bush-pea. Members of the heath family haven't coped well with the

drought either, especially Common Heath and the prostrate Cranberry Heath.

It is the same story in the Northern Reserves. At One Tree Hill, along Happy Valley, most of the Musk Daisy-bushes are showing signs of stress with much of their foliage turning brown – several have actually died. In the fern gully and up the slopes swathes of Gristle Ferns have shriveled, likewise the Austral Bracken understorey.

So what were the winners – the survivors? Of the eucalypts, Red Box as expected has coped well, so too surprisingly has Candlebark. The award for the most resilient wattle goes to *Acacia mucronata* (Narrow-leaf Wattle), unfortunately not a Warrandyte species, but doing very nicely up on One Tree Hill.

Shrub-wise, Rock Correa and Sweet Bursaria have generally fared well.

Only time will tell what the long-term effects of the drought are. If the rains come with soaking regularity it will be interesting to watch the ground for germination, the trees and shrubs for new growth. Inevitably new life will come again.



Two dead Hop Goodenia at Pound Bend

Worth Repeating

Fires in our Parks

By Michael Fendley, Director VNPA

The 1939 Black Friday fires burnt an area ten times that of Ash Wednesday 1983. There was extensive logging and cattle grazing in 1939, but only a handful of national parks, and 'greenies' had not been invented. How frustrating it must have been to not have parks and environmentalists as ready scapegoats for the Black Friday inferno.

These days we have no such troubles. The opportunistic seize on fires to run campaigns against the bush itself and the people who cherish it, and the predictable flow of letters have begun.

These letters are characterised by four points of attack: that logging, grazing and 4WD tracks reduce fires and that 'greenies' are to blame for urban-rural subdivisions. The facts are:

- Logging does not reduce fires: if anything, dense regrowth post-logging increases fuel loads.
- Grazing does not reduce fires: if anything, grazing reduces more succulent, fire-resistant vegetation and promotes woody, flammable shrubs.
- Endlessly extending 4WD tracks will not reduce fires. Approximately 75% of fires are

started by humans, either through arson, or by accident. Increasing the already extensive track network merely extends the opportunity for such deliberate or accidental acts.

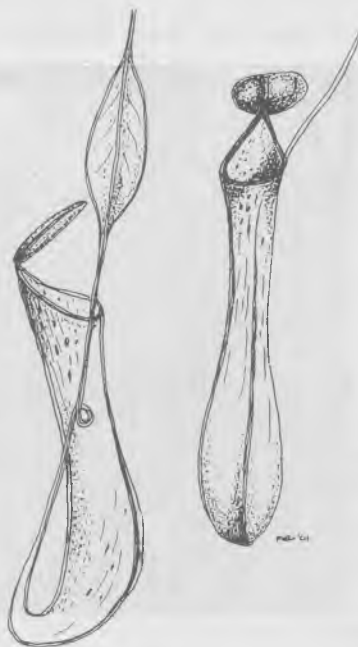
- City fringe residential developments in the bush or farmland are usually resisted (unsuccessfully) by 'greenies' as they lead to loss of native vegetation or arable land. Once built, these developments run cheek-by-jowl with high fire-risk environments.

Fire in the Australian environment is complex, challenging, sometimes necessary, and sometimes downright dangerous. Along with our nation's aridity, it is probably the most difficult aspect of our environment to deal with.

The challenge will only be met with great care, thought, planning and goodwill, not by the egregious twisting of events to find simple answers and easy targets. We must resist the unprincipled who seek to use the human tragedy of the current Canberra fires to further their bash-the-bush agenda.

The solution to living in our environment will only come from a mature mix of actions, which will deliver, where and when appropriate, fire control, fire accommodation and fire encouragement.

Source: VNPA Update Feb 2003.



Visions of Cape York York

All members and their friends are invited to an evening on Cape York.

Three different trips, three different years, three different people.

Three visions of Cape York from three perspectives.

Presented by Geoff Speedy, Flora Anderson and Mike Coupar

Date: Thursday March 27th

Time: 6.30pm for BBQ (BYO).

7.30pm for slide show.

Place: The 'Folly' near the nursery/rangers depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10)



Interesting Snippets

Contributions this month from Pat Coupar, Joan MacMahon, and Ray Clarke

Found on Fourth Hill

By Pat Coupar

Did you know there is a type of Silver Wattle that grows on the dry ridges far from water. I didn't. Not until Cam Beardsell showed me.

It is a dwarf form of *Acacia dealbata* – the large spreading tree that is so common along the banks of the river and flowers profusely in late winter. The dwarf Silver Wattle is known as an ecovariant of *Acacia dealbata* which occurs on hill spurs, but until recently was not known from Warrandyte.

It could be mistaken for Black Wattle unless you look closely at the glands along the mid-vein of the ferny leaf. On Black Wattles the tiny glands occur at irregular spaces, but Silver Wattle has them evenly spaced at the base of each pair of leaflets.

Dwarf Silver Wattle is an interesting and important plant. as it is favoured by the caterpillars of the Imperial Blue butterfly. These communal, territorial larvae have a strong preference for ferny-leafed wattles less than 2 metres high.

Moonbow

By Ray Clarke

Having risen early I stood outside the farmhouse looking across the wide valley over Wallan and the Hume Highway to Mt. Disappointment. A full moon was dropping towards the western horizon behind me. I could see the outline of the mountain against the pre-dawn sky, and then an isolated shower of rain on the mountain side gave rise to a slowly evolving "Moonbow."

I stood transfixed watching until there developed an ethereal arch of white beauty. In two minutes it faded leaving me to treasure a vivid memory of a rare natural phenomenon.

Snake in the House

Joan MacMahon

We really did have a snake in the house. It was a few weeks after the koala wandered into our entry area via the front door. The snake chose the back entry.

I was heading out the door, en route for the compost bins when I nearly stepped on it. I stopped but it didn't.

It slithered into a dead-end, did an about turn and instead of heading back out the door, ignored the opportunity to retreat and hid



under the freezer. Darn.

What to do but wait? We took most things off the floor, firmly closed the garage and kitchen doors (both well sealed at ground – level) and went to bed.

Next day we appeared to be snake free. At least it wasn't under the freezer.

I'd had my best ever view of these poisonous compatriots/fellow creatures and was pleased about that since it's always been son Dan who's the snake sightings.

This was a very healthy looking tiger snake, about 60cm long, with lovely green-coloured lower sides. Is that typical?

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.



Manna Gum
Eucalyptus viminalis

Free Entertainment

By Ray Clarke

The droll antics of a family of Magpies can provide endless entertainment. On the lawn outside my window a group regularly forage for who-knows-what. They will warble most charmingly, and sometimes take time off to discipline a young'un, who finally submits by lying on it's back.

If a trespassing Magpie from another family is sighted, one bird will give a special panic call, all take off simultaneously, and it is on for young and old. When the interloper has been vanquished they all come back, muttering between themselves and resume picking over the lawn.

When I moved from my Warrandyte house to a nearby retirement village in East Doncaster I did not give much thought to the birds I might inherit. The siting of my birdbath (refreshed daily) was one of the first jobs on my arrival, and during the past six months more and more birds have discovered it.

I have identified fourteen species, but sadly few small birds. However, to my delight I looked out one morning to see a tree near my window fairly seething with Silvereyes, probably newly arrived from breeding in Tasmania.



The Magpie Larks mix freely with the Magpies, their heads bobbing back and forth, and they fly up onto the birdbath to drink rather than bathe. The Little Wattlebird is the most thorough of the

bathers. He spends quite some time doing a complete job, under the armpits, back of the neck, all-over dunking, then he flies to an adjacent tree to shake his feathers and preen.

I was amused to see four Starlings, who had taken over the bath, being challenged by one immature Little Wattlebird. Twice they drove him off, but he came back fighting and the starlings finally fled.

The Spotted Turtledoves take a break from their persistent wooing to come and wade in the bath with a distracted air as though they have forgotten what they came for.

Such are some of the vignettes of bird life to watch and enjoy.

My Favourite Place



By Brian Murphy

My favourite place is the Wodonga - Thredbo and Perisher Valleys - Canberra - Melbourne circuit.

One passes the

Hume Weir, Old Tallangata, Corryong, Khancoban and Murray I power station. Scammell's Lookout is well worthwhile (modern toilets). The mountain vista gets closer over each ridge.

The chairlift at Thredbo is great for exploring the sub-alpine herbfield

flowers, and Perisher Valley and Charlotte's Pass also provide wonderful vistas.

Visiting Canberra on the way back takes in a conducted walk through the wonderful all Australian Botanic Gardens and I recommend the National Library café for tea and light meals. Here, surrounded by Leonard French stained glass and with the shores of the lake in view, life is pleasant. The National Gallery is close by.

On the way back stops at the Albury Botanic Gardens, Benalla Gallery and rose gardens, Weary Dunlop statue, break the trip and are all worthwhile.



Lake Hume

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.



MARCH 13TH NURSERY

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

MARCH 20TH NURSERY

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

MARCH 27TH MORNING ACTIVITY

Burgan Trial at Black Flat with Ranger, David Van Bockel

Meet at the depot at 9.30am or at the end of Nelson Rd (off Jumping Ck Rd) Melway ref. 23K11 at 10.00am

APRIL 3RD NURSERY

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

APRIL 10TH NURSERY

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

APRIL 17TH NURSERY

Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.
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 April 5th

Green Wedge Environmental Seminar Series 2003

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.

Manningham
City Council

ENVIRONMENT
SEMINARS
2002



FOWSP Committee 2002

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Mike Coupar 9844 1650
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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 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

Thursday 10th April 10 00am-12md
Thursday 17th April 10 00am-12md
Thursday 24th April 10 00am-12md
Thursday 1st May 10 00am-12md
Sunday 4th May 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.

Next Meeting will be held on Tuesday 1st April at Flora Anderson's house Lot 8, Styles Court, Wonga Park

**Deadline for the April newsletter is
April 6th**

And Spiders

By Pat Coupar

Did you see the spiders in space? I did. Well not the spiders themselves of course, but the shuttle Columbia in which they were travelling. And it was awesome. Not so much the bright yellow-red object whizzing across the blackness of space – I've seen satellites do that before – but it was the knowledge that inside that tiny fast moving speck were people. And spiders, from Australia.

'Spiders in Space' was a joint project between students from the Glen Waverly Secondary College, RMIT and the zoo. Their aim was to investigate how garden orb-weaving spiders adapt to micro-gravity, how they spin their webs and how they eat in a weightless environment.

Also on board the shuttle for scientific study were: harvester ants from USA, crystalline fibres from Israel, medaka fish from Japan, carpenter bees from Liechtenstein and silkworms from China.



I had been following the Columbia mission with interest, because of the orb-weaving spiders and

had tried looking for it on several nights, however, smoke from the ongoing bushfires made visibility impossible.

Then at 9.25pm on Tuesday January 28th, standing beside a river in southern New South Wales, I saw it. Through binoculars, I tracked the shuttle as it moved across the sky from right to left. I had an urge to wave. But didn't. Silly really. It was just that up there, orbiting the earth every 90 minutes, were seven people, men and women, travelling where none of us will ever go.

On Sunday morning, February 1st, I woke to the news that things had gone terribly, terribly wrong. What can I say? I have no words.

Burgan Trial

Over the last few years FOWSP, in conjunction with WSP rangers, have been carrying out a 'Burgan Control Trial' at Black Flat.

Large areas of dense Burgan have been cleared by chainsawing the shrubby trees and painting the cut trunks with undiluted Round Up.

After a recent assessment of the site by botanist and ranger Cam Beardsell it has been decided that no further clearing will take place. The main reason for this is that ongoing management of the trial site

would be difficult maintain if too large an area were cleared.

Currently follow up maintenance involves spraying any regrowth of cut stumps and hand weeding Burgan seedlings. In addition, a number of rare plants occurring at the site is being monitored as well as some species enrichment plantings.

The last FOWSP Burgan Trial morning will be held on Thursday March 27th at 10.00am. We will pile previously cut branches to be burnt, remove any seedlings and make a final assessment on regeneration of other indigenous species.



Zoological Meanings

Antechinus stuartii

An-te-kie-nus: "hedgehog equivalent"

Styue-ar-tee-ee: after J. Stuart, who made a preliminary description of the species

Worth Repeating

Study confirms need for legislative controls over nursery trade

By Jack Craw, Team Leader Extension Support, KTRI

Monash Honours student Elizabeth Schrammeyer has recently completed a study and thesis on the role and attitudes of the nursery industry and their customers as pathways for the spread of weeds in Victoria. This study has produced very interesting data on attitudes and perceived roles of industry and government. It has also produced a benchmark of public and industry environmental weeds awareness levels. The study particularly focussed on the factors that would most influence the nursery industry to change its behaviour towards the sale of environmental weeds.

One of the most interesting facts to emerge was that most growers have little idea of the invasive nature (or otherwise) of many plants that they sell. In a questionnaire that included well known bush environmental weeds (e.g. ivy, Japanese honeysuckle, blue periwinkle) as well as benign exotics and natives (e.g. pansy, star jasmine, happy wanderer), 41% of exotic nursery managers and 24% of native nursery managers failed to correctly identify the weedy and benign species. This may indicate a need for more information to be provided.

Merchants did generally agree (67%) that customers would consciously choose to buy non-invasive species if faced with an informed choice. They also strongly agreed (84%) that customers need more information about invasive plants and acceptable alternatives.

59% of respondents do not believe that removing invasive species from sale would cause them to lose business. However 9% felt that no environmental weed problem exists at all, and 32% indicated that they would not remove plants from sale voluntarily if informed of the species' invasiveness. This indicates that voluntary schemes to halt the spread of weeds via nurseries would appear bound to fail if approximately one third of all merchants continued to sell the plants. The economic advantages of not complying with voluntary schemes therefore become compelling as non-compliers are conferred a competitive advantage (i.e. more customer choice). This point was repeated by several merchants, who stated that legislation (i.e. ban on sale of invasive plants) is the preferred way to go, because it creates an even playing field. In fact 73% of respondents thought that government should introduce "more effective legislation that restricts the introduction and selling of invasive plants". This is a very encouraging finding, and confirms that recent Victorian government strategic initiatives to halt deliberate distribution of weeds are very likely to pass smoothly into practice without industry resistance.

Source: 'Under Control' Dec. 2002

Kimberley Silence

By Ray Clarke

Returning from the falls on the Mitchell River over an execrable road, my son and I reached the King Edward River. It looked such a tempting campsite that we scrapped other plans and set up camp here. In the afternoon, we alternately swam in a broad warm pool and lazed on warm rocks (that night we could see by torchlight the red eyes of several freshwater crocs).

In the late afternoon Nigel disappeared in one direction and I roamed through the bush upstream. There I found an area of huge rocks stretching along beside the river. The weather-smoothed surface emitted an aura of immense age, and, as I peered under sheltered ledges, I found a number of weird figures of aboriginal art painted on the rocks. What long-gone tribe and what history did these pictures portray?

Enveloped in the Kimberley silence and standing gazing at this art, I had an eerie feeling that, if I had swung round, I would have seen ghostly Aboriginal figures watching me through the bushes.

Pound Bend - a Special Place

By Geoff Barnsley

Geoff lives in Birmingham, England and wrote this poem after visiting Pound Bend

I have many special places
That are very dear to me.
Some are high on mountain tops,
And others are near the sea.
One is the resting place
For my brothers ashes
High on a pedestal of rock
Where the River Lledr splashes.

The wonderful smell of sun baked sea
Off the rugged Cornish Coast.
Listening to the screaming gulls
Seeing who can squawk the most.

But there is one little spot in Australia
That I will try to describe for you.
Where the dead straight trees grow cathedral tall
And a church-like reverence is due.

The Yarra forms a mighty loop
As it flows through Warrandyte
And encircles an island of land
Where Ghost Gums grow bright white.
The eucalyptus trees are of the type
Favoured by Koala Bears
They sit high aloft, one to a tree,
And living off its wares.

When the day is at its hottest.
It has a climate that's homespun
There is a lack of breeze between the trees
That languish in the sun.
Up above there are sleeping parrots

Their crimson plumage gleaming.
Kookaburras build up their call
To an irreverent blaspheming

Bull ants proceed across the path
In regimental single file.
They have a purpose in their step
And method in their guile.
A huntsman spider is very close,
They can attack at will
And if they bite it won't take long
Before you're seriously ill.

Skink lizards and tiger snakes
Are a rare and seldom sight
And wombats dwell beneath the soil
Only coming out at night.
The supreme aroma of Eucalyptus
Is intensified by the heat.
Making it natural to breathe deeper
And to savour the air so sweet.

There is something new with every stride
In this natural reservation.
The River Yarra protecting it
And offering preservation.
It keeps away the builders
And thwarts the dreaded fire.
Forming a picturesque perimeter
Without using fencing wire.

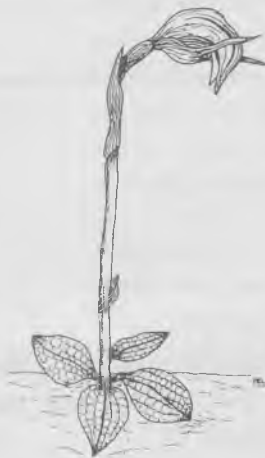
A Morning Special

By Julie Bishop

A special propagation morning was enjoyed at the nursery on Thursday January 13th. It was time to separate and repot two of our orchid species: *Pterostylis nutans* (Nodding Greenhood) and *Pterostylis curta* (Blunt Greenhood).

Under the supervision of Fowspian and Orchid Society member Dick Thomson we learnt that the underground tubers (like tiny potatoes) multiply about four to one.

The first thing we did was to separate the tubers and then repot them into a free-draining



mix. The pots were watered and will be watered again in a few weeks. The leaves should be starting to show again in late March.

If you haven't tried growing these species of native orchids, they are really quite easy to maintain in pots.

Pterostylis nutans and *Pterostylis curta* will be available for sale at the nursery in winter.

Footnote: The Nodding Greenhood Orchid is our Fowspian floral emblem.



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European Wasp
(Vespula germanica)

An aggressive introduced species that arrived in Australia, via New Zealand, in 1977. Wasps are particularly noticeable in autumn when ripening fruit, sweet food and drinks attract workers (sterile females). The workers, which make up the bulk of the colony, require nectar, pollen and other sugary fare to give them energy for hunting insects which they feed to the young wasp larvae.

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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