

April 2003

# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



# Newsletter

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

## A Second Chance

By Cam Beardsell

The Yarra River is a key area for rare plants in Warrandyte State Park. Many of the new plant species discovered in the Park in the last five years have been along the river. These include the rare Dwarf Skullcap (*Scutellaria humilis*) and Forest Bittercress (*Cardamine papillata*) at Blue Tongue Bend, and Indian Weed (*Sigesbeckia orientalis*) at Pound Bend. The Manna Gums are very important for the Powerful Owl and Koala. Last year the Swift Parrot, which was seen after a ten year absence, visited the flowering Manna Gums at Pound Bend and Norman Reserve. Our knowledge of the flora and fauna along the banks is now fairly complete. But what lives beneath the water?

In mid-March 2003 the freshwater fish branch at the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) of the Department of Natural Resources & Sustainability (DNRS) conducted a fish survey of Warrandyte Gorge. The techniques used were electrofisher either from a specially designed boat or by lead from a generator on the bank. Fike netting was also conducted at Mt Lofty. Seven native species and six introduced species were recorded. The native species were Australian Smelt (very common), Common Galaxias (common), Macquarie Perch (uncommon), Short-finned Eel (uncommon), Australian Grayling (rare), Short-headed Lamprey (very rare) and River Blackfish (very rare). This is half of the known species in this section of the Yarra. The ARI team stated that the Yarra was one of the most important streams in lowland Victoria for freshwater fish. They were most impressed with sections at Stane Brae and Mt Lofty. The

introduced species were Redfin (common), Carp (common), Goldfish (uncommon), Mosquito Fish (uncommon), Brown Trout (rare) and Roach (very rare).

The River Blackfish, which is now considered a rare species in Victoria, was recorded at Lower Homestead Road. This species has declined in the Yarra due to competition from Brown Trout and angling pressure. The impact of both these on long-term survival of blackfish needs to be assessed. Small populations also occur in the lower reaches of tributaries such as Watsons Creek. The two most significant findings were a secure breeding population of Macquarie Perch and an indigenous population of Australian Grayling.

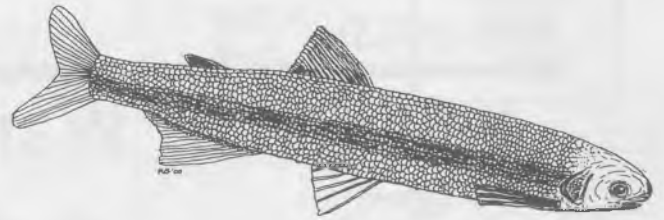
The Macquarie Perch is listed endangered in Victoria. Having virtually died out in the Goulburn and Ovens Rivers and in steady decline in the Mitta Mitta, the last remaining secure population is in the Yarra. Fish were released into the Yarra from King Parrot Creek (where now extinct) over 70 years ago. The reasons for the decline in the northern rivers is thought to be due to flow loss to the reservoirs such as Dartmouth and declining water quality due to European Carp. Macquarie Perch were recorded at all survey sites in Warrandyte Gorge where they primarily inhabit pools immediately above and below riffles and rapids. The largest populations were at Black Flat and Mt Lofty. The success of Macquarie Perch reflects the improved water quality of the river over the last decade. There is also a relationship in habitat between the Yarra

**Continued on next page**

### Second Chance contd.

and rivers north of the divide such as the Howqua. The areas share many species of riparian plants such as *Bolboschoenus fluviatilis* (Tall Clubsedge) and *Carex polyantha* (River Sedge).

Ten Australian Grayling (mostly juveniles) were electrofished and as many others were observed just upstream of the canoe point below Stane Brae dairy. They were recorded in a section where a narrow channel winds between islands. Immediately downstream is a shallow pool with pebble and sandy substrate. While occasional individuals have been taken by anglers which are likely derived from released populations, the Stane Brae fish are likely an indigenous population. This is the first official record of the species for this section of the Yarra in over 100 years. They were regarded as a common and popular angling fish at Templestowe in the late 1800s. The graylings breeding cycle requires migration from saltwater to freshwater. The prime breeding habitat was sand and cobble riffles at rapids where they feed on algae and invertebrates. This habitat in the Yarra is largely restricted to Warrandyte Gorge. The construction of a permanent weir at Dights Falls in 1895 blocked their passage to the breeding grounds. This has happened in many of the coastal streams across the range of the species. Urban development pressure and farm management such as degradation of banks also threatens the species which is now listed as vulnerable in Victoria.



**Australian Grayling**

With the construction of a fish ladder at Dights Falls around 1993, it appears that some of the population previously trapped below the weir now finds their way across the barrier. This is terrific news. Even better news, is that some of the preferred habitat is along our section of the Yarra at Warrandyte. We now have some data to show the benefit of and need for continuation of river rehabilitation programs such as willow removal. Willows have led to slumping of the banks at the graylings preferred breeding habitat. The slumping leads to increased water turbidity. Studies have found that grayling eggs smother under silt and fail to hatch.

The grayling were recorded at the Stane Brae Biolink site which is currently undergoing extensive revegetation. The bank where the fish were taken is being rehabilitated. At some stage in the future the ARI team intend to return to Stane Brae to conduct research on the Australian Grayling to determine information on their breeding habitat. This will provide an opportunity for a media promotion on the importance of the river heritage and environmental programs.

## An Omen?

By Pat Coupar

I had hoped it was an omen. Mike and I were having a long weekend camping at one of our favourite beaches on the Murray River in the Barmah State Park. We were sitting on the sand looking across the broad expanse of strongly-flowing water to creamy-trunked stands of River Reds, when a pair of small birds flew down to the river's edge for a drink.

The birds had subtle greyish-brown plumage with black barring on the neck and back and a distinctive circle of blue skin around the eye. I didn't recognise them as anything I had seen before, but then bird identification is not one of my strong points. I fetched the field guide.

The birds were Peaceful Doves. It was the third day of the war in Iraq and already it was too late.



## Interesting Snippets

Contributions this month from Pat Coupar, Julie Bishop and Karen Reynolds.

### Skippers in the Nursery

By Pat Coupar

It was a warm Thursday afternoon in March. Cam Beardsell, Joan MacMahon and myself were sorting the rare species enrichment plants in the 'old' hardening off area of the nursery when, in the space of a few minutes, three different species of skipper visited the flowers of our rare *Senecio*'s.

What is a skipper you may ask? A skipper is a type of butterfly that along with darts, flats and awls belong to the Family Hesperidae. Members of this family have a rapid jerky flight (hence their name), are generally small, orange-brown in colour, and have clubbed or hooked antennae.

The three species that visited the nursery were: *Symmomus* Skipper, by far the largest of the three, its caterpillars feed on Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*); Doubleday's Skipper, its caterpillars feed mainly on native grasses including Basket Grass (*Oplismenus* sp.) which we just happen to have growing in the nursery. The third species was the Yellow-banded Dart, which is an introduced species in our area, its caterpillars feeding on introduced grasses including *Paspalum* and *Panic Veldt* Grass.

### Dinning on a Window Ledge

By Karen Reynolds

When we bought and finally built at Kangaroo Ground South we did our best to fit in with the surrounding



environment. Little did we know how much we would ultimately be considered as part of the environment and how *our* home would become, at times, *their* home.

Our most frequent visitor at the moment is a Ewings Tree Frog (expertly identified by Pat). This cute little fellow comes to dine at our house just about every night. There he sits motionless on the window ledge, making his selection from a smorgasbord of tiny flying insects attracted by our kitchen light.

What's really amazing is that this particular window ledge is one storey high! I suppose it makes sense – after all he is a tree frog and our window ledge qualifies as a tree! Nice to see that we've been accepted into the community!

### Joining the Flock

By Julie Bishop

Recently I was lucky enough to witness a magnificent sight – a flock of about thirty Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. They were flying up from the river over Fourth Hill. It appears that around this time (mid-March) each year this large flock join the resident five that live on Fourth Hill.

### An Orchard in the Garden

By Julie Bishop

In my garden this month I have twice observed a very beautiful black butterfly. The second time I was able to get a close up look and with the help of my book 'Flying Colours' identified it as an Orchard Butterfly.



### New Visitors

By Julie Bishop

Keeping my bird baths topped up with fresh water each day this summer has proved very rewarding.

Visitors not usually seen include: Grey Fantails, Blue Wrens, Spotted Pardalote and, at dusk, four Bronzewing. How lucky am I?

## Butterfly Count

By Julie Bishop

About twenty Field Naturalists, including three Fowspians, met at Pound Bend on Sunday March 16<sup>th</sup> for a butterfly count led by entomologist Dr Tim New.

First Tim showed us some specimens of species we may observe. Then we set off in four groups with two butterfly nets per group.

Along the Ridge Track to the Pound Bend car park we identified the following six species: Common Brown, Shouldered Brown, Cabbage White, Common Grass Blue, Klugs Xenica, Ringed Xenica



Eastern Ringed Xenica

## Your Worst Weed

This month we are starting a new segment. Everyone is welcome to contribute, in fact the more people the better. A couple of sentences are all that is required on what you consider to be your worst weed.

If we adapt the loose definition used by many that, 'a weed is a plant growing where it is not wanted', then the scope is unlimited. A weed may therefore be an introduced species or a native, growing in your garden or the bush.

You may feel that the worst weed is something you have seen Interstate, in the wetlands of

Kakadu for example, or along the coast of New South Wales or Queensland, or even around the desert areas of Central Australia.

Your worst weed may not necessarily be considered a major environmental weed, but something that you just hate!

So everyone please give a few minutes thought to the question posed in this new segment.

Contributions (even verbal) can be passed on to Pat or Joan at the nursery on Thursday mornings or sent by e-mail to Joan at [joanmacmahon@hotmail.com](mailto:joanmacmahon@hotmail.com) or posted to Pat at 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte, 3113.

## My Worst Weed

By Mike Coupar, committee member

Monterey Pines (*Pinus radiata*) are the grand giants of the Rocky Mountains, USA. Here in Australia they are my number one environmental weed.

The reasons? They are BIG. They contain highly flammable turpentine. They inhibit native vegetation from growing near them by shading and dropping acidic pine needles.



## Sunrise

By Alwynne Buntine

Have you ever seen the sun rise,  
Over a darkened hill,  
And golden sunlight trickle,  
Into the valley still.  
It starts off very slowly,  
As it spills down from the rim,  
And suddenly the valley,  
Is filled with sunlight to the brim.

The mist hangs in the trees,  
Like a wispy gossamer veil,  
And as the sun warms up the earth,  
It drifts in a fine white trail.  
The wind stirs in the branches,  
And brushes against your face,  
While the sweet new scent of morning,  
Exudes from every place.

You hear the world awoken,  
To a brand new day.  
With bird calls and a flutter of wings,  
As they start out on their way.  
The cows begin to move in a seeming endless  
line,  
They wend their way towards the shed,  
They know it's milking time.

Now the farmer's clanking,  
In the dairy that's nearby,  
And you cannot hold the magic,  
No matter how you try.  
It feels like you've been cheated,  
And robbed of something dear,  
The joy, the experience of having nature near.

You can feel it every morning,  
The presence of the dawn,  
But in an instant it is gone,  
And a new day has been born.



## FOWSP Committee 2003

Flora Anderson	9722 1776	Public Officer	<u>Wildlife Rescue</u>	
Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor	Julie Pryor	9722 1117
Ray Clarke	9841 8507	Treasurer		
Peter Curry	9844 0958	Secretary	<u>Market</u>	
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary	Marie Krause	9712 0498
Mike Coupar	9844 1650			
Melanie Birtchnell	9870 1349		<u>Park Office</u>	9844 2659
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797			
Joan MacMahon	9844 3213			
			<u>Nursery Manager</u>	0408800026

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 29<sup>th</sup> April at Pat & Mike Coupar's house, 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte

## FOWSP THURSDAY PROGRAM

**APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup> NURSERY**  
Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.  
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

**MAY 1<sup>ST</sup> NURSERY**  
Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.  
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

**MAY 8<sup>TH</sup> MORNING ACTIVITY**  
**Boomers Reserve Rare Species Planting with Cam Beardsell**  
Meet at the depot at 9.30am or at Bluehouse Rd, (off Kangaroo Ground/St Andrews Rd), Melway ref. 264 D5 at 10.15am

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

**MAY 15<sup>TH</sup> NURSERY**  
Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.  
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

**MAY 22<sup>ND</sup> NURSERY**  
Propagation morning. 10.00 am onwards.  
Plant sales (by donation) 10.00am-12md

## Green Wedge Environmental Seminar Series 2003

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.

**Deadline for the May newsletter is  
May 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Next Warrandyte market is on Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

## Warrandyte State Park Easter Holiday Activities -2003

Come along and join in the fun at Warrandyte State Park during Easter. Our knowledgeable local Ranger staff lead each activity Loads of fun for all the family. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

### A night out with "Bat Man"

Help the Ranger set up traps for Jumping Creek's bat population, returning later to marvel at these wonderful creatures. 'See' and 'hear' bats with state-of-the-art technology. Strategic pre-planning by Warrandyte State Park's staff ensures that there *will* be bats on the night - and who knows - other nocturnal surprises as well?

**Date:** Wednesday 16 April.

**Start Time:** 6pm. **Duration:** 2.5 hours

**Meeting Point:** Jumping Ck Reserve.

Mel Ref: 24 A 11

**Cost:** Free

### Night Walk

Join the Ranger in search of Warrandyte State Park's nightlife. Possums, koalas and a few other surprises? Suitable for the whole family. Don't forget to bring suitable clothing including

comfortable shoes and wet weather gear if necessary, a snack and cool drink.

**Date:** Thursday 17 April & Thursday 24 April

**Start Time:** 6.30pm. **Duration:** 2.5 hours

**Meeting Point:** Pound Bend Reserve

Melway Ref: 23 A 11

**Cost:** Free

### Breakfast with the Birds

Pound Bend at dawn reveals a marvellous display of Victorian birdlife. Join an expert for a leisurely walk, stopping halfway for a sumptuous breakfast of pancakes and billy tea. This activity is great for the whole family. Don't forget to bring suitable clothing and a pair of binoculars if you have them.

**Date:** Sunday 20 April

**Start Time:** 6:30am **Duration:** 2.5 hours

**Meeting Point:** Pound Bend Reserve

Melway Ref: 23 A 11

**Cost:** Free

**Bookings are essential** for all activities and activities are subject to change without notice.

For more information call the Parks Victoria information Centre on 13 1963 or visit our website at [www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)



We have a dozen beautifully illustrated brochures of the 'Indigenous Plants of Banyule' to give away. About 50 species are delicately painted in watercolour.

If you would like one please phone Joan on **9844 3213**

### Important Notice

Please check the address label on the front of your newsletter to find out when your subscription is due. Some members are paying too much too often!!!! Others are overdue!!!!

### Agapanthus

If you must have Agapanthus in your garden or beside your driveway, remember to dead head the flowers **NOW** to prevent the spread of seed.

## Library Update

By Judy Green

The following books are missing from the FOWSP/State Park library and have not been entered in the borrower's book. If you have them could they please be returned as soon as possible.

- EN504 Discover Warrandyte
- W1202 Environmental Weed Invasions in Australia
- W 1203 Weeds of Forest Roadsides and Gardens
- FL630 Flora of Melbourne
- EN529 Victoria's National Parks

Some have been missing since 2001, these are:

B202, B205, FL606, FL610, W1210. Please check your bookshelves, they may have been there for so long you have forgotten all about them.

Friends are very welcome to use the library, which holds over 200 books, any time during Park Office hours. A small number of these titles marked with a red sticker may be read in the library but not removed from the site. If you do borrow please enter details in the record book.

## River Monitoring

By Pat Coupar

On a sunny Sunday afternoon in the middle of March FOWSP's two new canoes were launched for the first time.

Last year our group successfully obtained a grant of money from Parks Victoria to carry out monitoring of threatened species and environmental weeds. The two canoes, paddles and safety equipment were purchased with this money, along with a global positioning satellite (GPS).

The section of the river chosen for our first survey and clean up was between Jumping Creek Reserve and Black Flat. There were 10 people in total, in four canoes and two kayaks.

A surprisingly small amount of rubbish was collected along the way although it did include two rather large items – a rubber tyre and a sheet of corrugated iron.

An isolated Tutsan (\**Hypericum androsaemum*) plant, complete with berries, was found and removed. This environmental weed is on the increase in Warrandyte State Park and it is important to find and record these isolated occurrences before birds spread the seed further.

As part of our monitoring of threatened species we checked up on the only patch of Eel Weed (*Vallisneria americana*) growing in the river within the Warrandyte State Park. It looked healthy and did not seem to be suffering from the low water levels. Speaking of which, the river was certainly at a very low level, however, most rapids were negotiated without the need to portage.

As we paddled along there was time for some identification of the reeds and rushes growing at the edge of the water. These included the large robust Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) which, as its name suggests, is a common cosmopolitan species, and Tall Marsh-sedge

(*Bolboschoenus fluviatilis*) an uncommon species in the State, but doing very well in this section of the Yarra.

While we were discussing the value of the native Scrub Nettle (*Urtica incisa*) as a foodplant for the caterpillars of the Australian Admiral butterfly, what should flit by but the butterfly itself resplendent in black, orange and cream.

One of the bird highlights was the sighting of a magnificent Azure Kingfisher perched on the branch of a tree overhanging the river. Some of the team spotted a large stick nest (at least a metre wide), high on a horizontal branch of an immense Manna Gum. Marie Krause thought it was probably built by a Brown Goshawk. How would she know? She and Wolfgang has the good fortune to have a pair nest at their home in Catani Boulevard.

The trip ended at Mullens Orchard, a delightful picnic area in Black Flat Reserve where Ranger, Glen Jameson was there to meet us with afternoon tea.

In all it was a most successful first outing for our new canoes. A big thankyou to Glen for organising the transport of canoes and the removal of the rubbish, and of course the welcome refreshments at the end.



## FOWSP at the Festival

By Marie Krause

The FOWSP trailer at the Warrandyte Festival enjoyed a very successful weekend. Old hands Betty and Neal and first-timer Amy were among the many Fowspians on duty. Peter delivered the trailer, Geoff and Lee brought trays of plants from the nursery and Julie put a lot of effort into displays, painted new signs and also spent several hours helping at the trailer on both days. Other Fowspians who looked after the trailer were Cath, Joan, Sue, Lee, Geoff, Kerrie, Marjan, Antje, Alicia, Bruce, Anne, Marie and Wolfgang.

Due to the large number of plants at the nursery which needed to be planted it was decided to offer them at the Festival for a small donation. This proved so popular that urgent calls were made to the nursery manager (Josh) for more stock and these were selected and delivered by Cathy with help from Cam.

'Planting Guides' were also popular and these had our colourful brochures of local eucalypts, wattles and wildflowers inserted.

Any FOWSP members not currently helping on the trailer at the monthly Warrandyte market who would like to get involved are invited to call me on 9712 0498

## To Cape Bridgewater and Back in a Weekend

report on a recent journey by Lee Speedy and Joan MacMahon

**W**hy did two of your committee members make this trek to the other side of Portland?

We went to represent you at the biennial Friends Network conference. We met 'friends' from Buckley Falls in Geelong, Werribee Gorge and the Long Forest Mallee, the Prom, French Island, the great South West Walk, the Wonnangatta/Moroka, the Wonnangatta Valley, Gariwerd/Grampians, Dandenong Valley, Langwarrin Flora and Flora Reserve, Wyperfeld and Stony Creek (not the one which starts in Kangaroo Ground and joins the Yarra about 400 metres north of our nursery, rather the one which starts in Sunshine and flows into the Yarra near the West Gate bridge).

We were treated to a series of talks by people as diverse as Geraldine Ryan, a retired teacher of literature and former Greens candidate who now 'works' (actually volunteers her time) very hard on a project to link the south-west coastal area to the wonderful Little Desert conservation area. She's based at the non-government lobby group Environment Victoria (was known for many years as the Conservation Council of Victoria.) She's trying to safeguard the Cobboboonee State Forest, which is quite close to Portland and has long been used in an extractive fashion. Getting the timber people to change their behaviour is understandably not easy – put yourself in their place!

However it must be done as do we not have a moral obligation to save our fellow creatures? In the Cobboboonee forest live powerful owl, yellow-bellied glider, long-nosed potoroo, masked owl, southern brown bandicoot, swamp antechinus, barking owl.

Then a younger woman called Julia Kirkwood who has done a natural resource-type degree at Deakin Uni. gave us an insight into her activities. She is working for the Threatened Species Network to raise awareness of the needs of the red-tailed black cockatoo. A count last year only managed to scrape up 670 of them. Not only are their numbers small but an essential part of their habitat continues to be killed by farmers clearing their paddocks. The trees are old bulokes (*Casuarina luehmannii*). These are listed as nationally endangered by the boys in Canberra. Even so, permission to clear them is being given through the office of our environment minister.

Following the 'no net loss' principle an agreed number of young bulokes are planted elsewhere. Yet it is known it will take about a century for them to become good habitat!

If only our society would develop a system to assist farmers, (who control so much of our natural world), to farm without further damage. A skilled wildlife photographer from the Portland Field Naturalists gave us a slide presentation. I just had to ask how he managed such brilliant close-ups of tiny birds such as fairy wrens. (In my experience they don't stay still long enough for me to focus my binoculars.) He said he used a fixed 300mm lens and some sort of hide with a cloth to cover his hand movements. I reckon he neglected to mention his years of patient practice, his enormous knowledge and his love of western Victoria's wildlife. His show was made even more special by the magic of Mozart's horn concerto.

We had a talk by a Melbourne-based senior manager from Parks Victoria who gave a wide-ranging talk (no bombshells) which included some information about the recent fires (90% of alpine country above 800 metres was burnt.)

He was speaking because Mat le Duc (previously head ranger here in Warrandyte and now in charge in the south west) has not been well and was up in Melbourne. We hope very much he recovers fully and soon as this is not his first battle.

When Mat and Cecelia and son Ethan were based here they had the wonderful experience of living in the Park house at Stane Brae, (Melway 24 B7) before the travel bug got them and they went to work at Uluru via Mootwingee National Park. (If you fancy walking in to find the house you'll be disappointed as it was pulled down during the J.K. era. The brick dairy and a large metal shed remain. Wonder why.)

I forgot to say that on the way down we called to see some ex-Warrantitians, who are also affectionately remembered. They are the folk singing, nature nurturing, Hildebrands (Joy and Greg). They moved from the steep hills of Warrandyte to the flat expanse of the western plains. They are very happy making music, planting out their formerly bare block and serving their guests several types of scrumptious hand-made bread, Greek salad and homemade biscuits for afternoon tea.





By B.G

### **February Facts**

Owing to various exigencies I Spy missed the February deadline.

### **Bruce Bitten**

Bruce McQuade was apparently bitten by a White-tailed Spider. Bruce was away for three weeks. His work at pot-filling and Poa pricking out was sadly missed. Get well Bruce. What happened to the spider?

### **I Spy a Spy**

Michelle Hanslow, a student at Swinburne TAFE studying Natural Resource Management wants to join FOWSP. As part of her study she may report on the activities of our group.

### **Rearing Rubida**

Ellie Dawson and Adelaide Wilsen were helping to prick out *Eucalyptus rubida* (Candlebark). They would like to get to the depot more frequently.

### **Fighting Fires**

Most of the Park staff have had several stints away in north-east Victoria fighting on the fire fronts this year.

### **Melanie from Mooroolbark**

Melanie Lande a final year student from Swinburne was helping at the nursery as part of her work experience for a Natural Resource Management course.

### **Festival Flurry**

The nursery was a hive of activity as people prepared our mobile-stall for the Warrandyte Festival - signs on the trailer, plants being selected etc.

### **Fisc, Fisk, Fisker, Fisks, Fiskaz, Fiskos**

Two Fish tanks are now operational and on view at the nursery. On view for one week only were: Macquarie Perch (*Macquaria australasica*) and Jolly Tails (*Galaxia maculatus*) both are native fish and have since been released back into the wild.

Still on view in the other tank is the White-clawed Spiny Crayfish (*Euastacus woiwuru*) living in a 'four inch' terracotta pot. So, the plant nursery spread its empire tentacles beyond the realm of botany. (Metaphor?).

### **Monarch Migration**

January 13<sup>th</sup> last year, drenching and dropping temperatures left an estimated 500 million orange and black Monarch butterflies dead in their Mexico winter roosting habitat.

After a mild winter however, hundreds of millions of the north-bound butterflies survived the 4000km migration - a remarkable tale of recovery.

But across much of North America, genetically modified corn (whose pollen may be toxic to butterflies), and the wilting effects of New England drought, present an expanded worry to their survival.

Source: *The Age*, March 2003

## **An Unguarded Moment**

By Pat Coupar

The programmed Thursday morning activity, organised and led by Ranger Cam Beardsell, was to remove rabbit guards from old plantings on Fourth Hill. The plants no longer requiring the black plastic mesh guards were either dead or, in most cases, too big to need them anymore.

And so that is what we did. Starting at Tunnel St and ending up at School Tk. Many of the guards were stapled onto the stakes making removal difficult, others needed to be cut away because the branches of the trees and shrubs had grown through them.

The morning was punctuated by a look of one of the species enrichment fences adjacent to Betton Tk. The stop was unplanned and memorable with Cam explaining to a captive audience the reason for the fence and the ongoing

maintenance being carried out including the propagation and planting out of Warrandyte's rarest wattle - Varnish Wattle (*Acacia verniciflua*).

From rare plants and weeds to discussions about foxes and fox traps, rabbits and poison carrots, and tuans and nest boxes. Then there was the revelation that the strange rosette-like galls so common at the end of the branches on the Golden Bush-pea (*Pultenaea gunnii*) are caused by a tiny wasp - its presence stimulates an overgrowth of cells in the leaves.

And there was the geology. It was fascinating stuff. Too much to absorb without the use of pen and paper and I didn't have either.

Cam answered all questions with clarity and utmost patience. We thank him for giving up his day off to lead this activity and for sharing with us his incredible knowledge of the natural environment.



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P.O. Box 220  
Warrandyte, 3113



**Common Reed**  
*(Phragmites australis)*

Growing to a height of around three metres, this is one of the taller members of the grass family (Poaceae). Common Reed is a semi-aquatic plant that grows in dense stands along the Yarra and other watercourses. Its silky plume-like flowers, which are produced in summer, are replaced in autumn by fluffy seedheads.

The stems of this plant were used by Aborigines for making spears and the leaves, for weaving baskets.

**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*