

August 2003

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

It's the Best Yet

By Pat Coupar

The gauge read 27 millimetres. It was the wettest July day for ten years. And that wasn't all. The rain continued on and off for several days and then again the following week.

What was the trigger? Was it the decision to increase water restrictions to stage two, or have all the forces of nature come together and remembered how to make it rain again.

Of course we need more, much more, before the seven-year drought is over, but it's a start and the best period of consistent soaking rain for years.

Whatever the reason the result has been fantastic, both in the bush and in the garden. All the plants that hung on gamely throughout those long hot dry months have been rewarded. Now is the time – if you haven't done it already – to cut back all that old dead wood to stimulate new growth. And now is the time to plant. The ground is still cold and the plants won't do much for a while, but Spring is not far away.

Finally the bush is green and healthy again. One place that is definitely worth a close look is the riverside planting at Pound Bend picnic reserve, part of the ongoing Biolink Project and the site of many FOWSP-grown plants. This year, for the first time, the tussock grasses (Poas) have produced thousands and thousands of seedlings. There are young Silver Wattles and Manna Gums too. It is a heartening sight after years of no germination.

Weeds, of course, have also relished the rain and are fighting with the natives for dominance –

a battle which they will probably win if left to their own devices. Species like the South African Panic Veldt grasses – annual and perennial – are particularly prolific.

2003 has already been a big year for plantings of revegetation and species enrichment plants by FOWSP and Green Corps, and there are still many more to be put in the ground before it gets too late.

We have waited a long time for good winter rains and while it not enough, it's the best yet with the normally wettest months still to come. At last there is hope that this might be the beginning of the end of the grueling drought.

With luck we should have a great wildflower season. In fact I think it has already begun. The ever-reliable wattles are breaking out into bloom and, like a creamy mist, flowering Clematis hangs over trees and on fencelines. Underfoot, single sweetly perfumed white flowers are appearing on the spoon-shaped rosettes of the Scented Sundew and pastel mauve Hoveas lurk amongst grasses, while the rich Purple Coral-pea scrambles and

twines amongst shrubs.

– Why not give yourself a treat. Make the time, get out there and enjoy our treasured bush.



Matt LeDuc

A caring ranger committed to the environment

Matt LeDuc devoted more than 25 years of his all-too-short life to management of National Parks and conservation. Three of those years, January 1992 to January 1995, were as Ranger-in-Charge of Warrandyte State Park – a difficult and challenging position in which he excelled.

Starting as a Seasonal Interpretation Officer with the National Parks Service in 1977 (having been recruited by Georgie Waterman), Matt was promoted through the succession of Ranger and Park Planner positions at Cape Conran, Wilson's Promontory, Horsham, Maribyrnong Valley Metropolitan Park and Organ Pipes National Park before becoming Ranger-in-Charge at Warrandyte. It is indicative of his enthusiasm and expertise that he was able to take on a wide range of roles, including interpretation, park and resource planning and park management.

Interpersonal skills were a feature of Matt's style of operation and this was very evident at Warrandyte where he worked closely with FOWSP, encouraging our members to become involved in resource surveys and environmental works in the Park, enabling the Friends group, as it is, one of the most valuable in the State.

While at Warrandyte, Matt worked closely with the community, serving on several municipal, tourism and tertiary education committees. His commitment to the environment was such that he was always prepared to help well beyond official hours – a characteristic shared with many park rangers.

As another example of his 'extra effort' Matt took on the onerous task of Honary Editor of the Victorian National Parks Association journal, *Parkwatch*, for two years. Foreshadowing a deep

interest which he developed in indigenous issues, the first *Parkwatch* for which he was editor, autumn 1981, carried an article by Matt titled 'Aboriginal sites: The Human Factor in our Aboriginal Heritage'. Not surprisingly, after leaving Warrandyte the next two locations in which he worked were 'joint-management' national parks – Mutiawintji (NSW) where he was Senior Ranger for three years and Uluru-Kata Tjuta as Park Operations Manager for two years. In the latter role he supervised nearly 30 staff, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. His relationship with and support for indigenous people at those parks was an outstanding feature of his work. As FOWSP members discovered, Matt was a 'hands-on', caring ranger – important qualifications for any manager, but especially valuable for joint-management of parks to succeed.

When diagnosed with cancer it was necessary for Matt and his family to move back to Victoria for treatment. In January 2001 Parks Victoria employed Matt as a Ranger-in-Charge in the Portland area where again, despite his illness, he demonstrated his skills with people, planning and indigenous issues. Sadly he died on the 10th of July 2003.

After leaving Warrandyte, Matt, Cecilia and Ethan kept in touch and often returned. These visits became occasions for FOWSP members to gather for dinner happily discussing the world's environmental problems over a glass (or three) of wine.

With Matt's passing, the environment and FOWSP have lost a great friend, but he will be long remembered for his cheerful, friendly and dedicated contribution in many parts of Australia.

Matt will be sadly missed. Our deepest sympathy to Cecilia, Ethan and the rest of Matt's family.

Don Saunders

Wildflower Walks

Patho Plains Grasslands including Glassons Grassland

When: Friday 3rd October 10.am

Where: Meet at Glassons Grassland at cnr of Whitfield & Aird Rds (off Eucha Mitiamo Rd)
BYO lunch, mug & chair

To book contact Elvyne Hogan 5435 3933 (elvyneh@tfn.org.au) or Deanna Marshall 5430 4367 (deanna.marshall@dse.vic.gov.au)

Terrick Terrick National Park Grasslands

When: Saturday 4th October 10.am

Where: Meet outside the Mitiamo Pub
BYO lunch, mug & chair (tea & coffee provided)

To book contact Deanna Marshall 5430 4367 (deanna.marshall@dse.vic.gov.au) or Mark Tscharke 5450 3951 (mtscharke@parks.vic.gov.au)



Bush Backyard

Contributions this month from Lynda Hamilton
and Pat Coupar.

Drawings by Melanie Coupar

Name Change

Please notice the new name for this column, suggested by one of our members as a better alternative to Interesting Snippets.

At it Again

By Pat Coupar

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos are once again vandalising the nursery at Pound Bend. Despite Strings, dangling chunks of polystyrene and other deterrents the birds are back wreaking havoc amongst the pricked out seedlings.



Pieces of bitten off plants litter the ground.

Most upsetting was a whole stem, complete with flower buds, of a Blue Grass Lily (*Caesia calliantha*) that we have been propagating to plant back in the Park. This species is one of our rarest lilies which is only found in a rather weedy section of The Common. A previous occurrence at Koornong has become extinct.

Blacks are Back

By Lynda Hamilton

I seem to remember in the FOWSP newsletter some months ago an article about Black Cockatoos and that their numbers were diminishing. Since reading the article, I have been on the lookout for these animals as I have never really seen them flying about.

A couple of months ago I was thrilled to see three of them (I checked the bird book and was pleased to have correctly identified them)! A couple of weeks later I noticed that three had turned into a least a dozen! They are unmistakable in the air - they resemble a Lancaster bomber and have a very distinct cry!

In early July I was driving home from a short trip to IGA and I heard the cry of Black Cockatoos! Looking up to the sky I was amazed to see a huge flock - I stopped counting at 35 (I was holding traffic up!).

So, if my memory serves me correctly and the Black Cockatoos are threatened, I am thrilled to report that the numbers I saw may in fact turn the situation around!

Trawling

By Pat Coupar

Several years ago we turned our struggling veggie patch into a pond. It was quite simple. We dug a hole and in it we placed a layer of sand, carpet underlay and finally the butyl liner. Grasses and sedges were planted around the edge and pots of aquatic species submerged in the water.



The frogs came themselves. At various times we have heard four species calling. Every now and then I trawl the water with a net. The results are always interesting. Most recently I netted some very large black tadpoles - probably belonging to the Spotted Marsh Frog and clumps of little black eggs suspended in a clump clear jelly. This is the spawn of the Ewings (Southern Brown) Tree Frog which has been delighting us with its high-pitch whistling 'weep-eeep-eeep', over recent weeks especially at night after rain.

More Snippets Please

The feedback on this segment has been very positive, but it does rely on you, the members, to keep contributions coming.

Don't forget snippets can be about anything of interest in the environment and do not necessarily have to be about Warrandyte.

Contributions can either be dropped into the editor at 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte or via email at ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au

For Sale

Light force spotlight, red lens attachment, battery in shoulder bag, battery charger.

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Dates for your Diary

A Special Event

All Fowspians are invited to take part in a special planting day at a special site in a little-known area of Warrandyte State Park. The section of river terrace, which is opposite, Jumping Creek Reserve has become known as the 'Sigma Site' after the drug company which donated money for its rehabilitation.

Sigma representatives have been invited to join in the planting and enjoy a fun day of activities organised by the Osborne Peninsula Landcare group.

Activities include: badge-making, face-painting, damper on sticks and 'Water Watch'. Free bbq lunch and afternoon tea and wine will also be provided. The 'Chocolate Lilies' a local acappella choir will be on hand to entertain. A variety of books and cards will be available to buy.

When: Sunday September 14th from 11.am to 3.30pm

Where: Meet at 27 Osborne Rd, Nth Warrandyte (car pool where possible)

Sunday Planting Day at Koornong

Date: Sunday 24th August

Time: 1.00pm to 3.00pm

Place: Koornong. Meet at the lower car park Koornong Crescent, North Warrandyte (Mel ref: 23 J8)

This site, beside the river track, was once a weedy wasteland full of Blue Periwinkle and Yorkshire Fog. The weeds are now gone, but to prevent others moving in we need to plant it up densely with a variety of native grasses, sedges and ground covers. We have heaps of plants to go in the ground and planting is easy in the soft soils.

The more people, the more plants we can get into the ground, the less weeds will return. Even if you can only spare half an hour that would be great.

Ranger David Van Bockel will be on hand to help and offer advice. Afternoon tea will be provided.



A Special Invitation

Free spit roast lunch and guided bus tour to sites of biological significance

Manningham City Council is pleased to invite you to join us in celebrating the launch of our new Land Management Guide. The guide covers all aspects of property management planning from soil and water issues to bushland and pasture management. It promises to be a useful tool in assisting property owners in both urban and non-urban areas to manage their land more effectively.

When: Thursday 25th September, 2003

Where: Jumping Creek Picnic Area (Melways Ref. 24 A9)

The official launch will take place at 11:30 am, followed by a gourmet spit roast lunch.

At 2 pm, Botanist Paul Foreman will lead a guided bus tour to key sites of biological significance. Seats on the bus are limited, so bookings are essential. Bring along your walking shoes.

To register your interest in the lunch and/or bus tour please contact Kay Toussaint on 9840 9348 or email kay.toussaint@manningham.vic.gov.au

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.



AUGUST 21ST NURSERY

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

AUGUST 28TH MORNING ACTIVITY

Planting at Pound Bend

Meet at the car park Pound Bend picnic reserve (Mel. Ref. 23 A11) at 10.15 am. or at the depot at 9.45am.

SEPTEMBER 4TH NURSERY

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

SEPTEMBER 11TH NURSERY

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

SEPTEMBER 18TH NURSERY

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

SEPTEMBER 25TH NURSERY

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

OCTOBER 2ND 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

Green Wedge Environmental Seminar Series 2003

Thursday 4 September - "Bushland on Life Support".

Speaker: Peter Thrall, Plant Ecologist, CSRIO Centre for Plant Biodiversity Research. Peter's PhD focused on plant population biology and diseases. Peter will relate his research to rare and threatened plants, conservation, and helpful soil organisms.

Thursday 2 October - "The Yarra and its Tributaries in Manningham". **Speaker:** Kieran Croker, Section Leader, Waterway Planning, Melbourne Water. Kieran will discuss the health and values of our local waterways, and what works are being undertaken to support them.

Thursday 6 November - "Orchid Conservation in Victoria"

Speaker: Dick Thompson, Vice President Australasian Native Orchid Society. Dick will talk about his work on recovery programs for rare and threatened orchid species, and some issues in orchid conservation around the state.

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

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		
Sue Shepherd	9844 3754	Assistant 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			
Michelle Hanslow	0402251577		<u>Nursery Manager</u>	0408800026

The nursery is open for plant sales (by donation) every Thursday 10.00am to 12md and the first Sunday of each month 2.00pm to 400pm.

Sunday Opening Days for 2003

September 7th

October 5th

November 2nd

December 7th

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.

The next FOWSP committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 10th September at Pat & Mike's house, 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte

Deadline for the September newsletter is September 14th



Walking with a Dingo

By Pat Coupar

During our recent two-week break in Far East Gippsland, we crossed over the border into New South Wales to visit the Nadgee Nature Reserve.

Upon arriving at the Merrica River Ranger Station we were greeted, not by a Ranger, but by a dingo. The animal, a young female in beautiful condition, had a glistening honey-coloured coat with just a splash of white fur behind the neck and on the tip of its tail.

Although we did not deliberately make contact, the dingo approached me while I was studying the information board. Cautiously she sniffed at my hand, which was held loosely by my side, before moving away.

Despite the time - nearly 2.00pm on the shortest day of the year - we decided to walk to the mouth of the Merrica River. Claimed to be 4 kilometres one way, a comment on the distance of the walk in the visitors book had us wondering. It read: "Four kilometres! As the crow flies!"

Shortly after we set off we realised that the dingo was following us several metres behind. When we stopped, she stopped. We neither encouraged her nor discouraged her. She kept her distance, darting into the bush every now and then - light-footed, silent and incredibly agile, sometimes jumping on top of fallen logs to look around with ears pricked.

Approaching our destination, the dingo took the lead and headed off down the track to the beach. We saw her again at the mouth of the Merrica River. A group of walkers were there too, preparing to set up camp for the night. While they would certainly have had food in their packs and we didn't, our



dingo ignored them choosing to accompany us along the beach.

As we wanted to get back before dark, we gave ourselves just 15 minutes in this magical place, but it was enough for us to know that we must come back and spend a day here.

With an eye on the sinking sun, we and the dingo set off back up the track. This time the dingo went ahead from the start. We lost her for at least twenty minutes, and just as we were thinking she had deserted us there was a rustle in the understorey and there she was bright-eyed and panting hard.

For the last kilometre all three of us dragged our heels, but we made it back to the Ranger Station before dark. As we packed up to leave the dingo hung around us, still keeping her distance.

As I was about to get in the car she came up to me as she had done before when we arrived. She sniffed at my hand again only this time her tail was wagging and she gave me a gentle lick before retreating. A special moment.

Still no ranger at the Ranger Station. Although the residence looked occupied there were no lights and no car - a pity because there were many questions we would like to ask about our canine guide.



Zoological Meanings

Pied Currawong
Strepera graculina

"Jackdaw-like noise-maker"

Worth Repeating

Three endangered species found in Yarra River

By Melissa Fyfe

A study commissioned by a golf course developer has turned up nationally significant populations of three endangered fish in the middle Yarra River.

Healthy numbers of Australian grayling, Macquarie perch and Murray cod were found at the Wonga Park site, in Melbourne's outer east.

With native fish populations down to 10 per cent of what they were before white settlement, the discovery has excited environmentalists and fish scientists.

The Macquarie perch was an inspiring find. It is one of two major populations left in the state - the other, at Dartmouth Dam, is under threat from drought and sediment pollution from the summer's bushfires.

But green groups believe the fish will be threatened by the proposed 18-hole Henley golf course to be built on the Yarra's flood plain. It will be opposite the existing Jack Nicklaus-designed St John golf course in the Heritage Golf and Country Club.

Developer Yarra Valley Golf has one last planning obstacle: the Federal Environment Minister David Kemp will have the last say

because it involves a possible threat to endangered species. A decision is due within days.

The fish study, by the Arthur Rylah Institute, found that the Henley golf course posed a threat to fish because of sediment running into the river and on to the area where eggs and larvae develop. Changing the workings of the flood plain and increased nutrient run-off from pesticides and herbicides could also harm fish.

But the report concluded that the developer had addressed many of these concerns and the risk to the fish was low.

But Friends of the Earth, Native Fish Australia and the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria believe the risk that a flood could wash construction materials and sand into the river is too high. About 300,000 cubic metres of soil will be moved around on the flood plain during construction.

The groups are concerned that the golf course will set a precedent for Yarra flood plain developments and that this would reduce water quality downstream in Melbourne.

Phillip Rutherford, Yarra Valley Golf's Henley golf course project manager, said levee-like walls would be erected during construction. The company had promised to cut back on chemical use, revegetate and rejuvenate 14 hectares of wetlands, plant 350,000 trees and get rid of cattle that had caused problems.

Source: *The Age* 11/8/03

My Worst Weed

By Helen Larkin

I haven't known this particular plant for long. I first noted 'water lettuce' in the ornamental ponds displayed at my local nursery last year.

The more I observe this highly recommended water plant the more I do loathe it. It appears to be of a vigorous, blanketing type and I shudder at the impact it will have on waterways when it enters a non-controlled area as it inevitably will do.

Don't we have too many of this type of waterways strangler already?



Your Worst Weed

Contributions (even verbal) can be passed on to Pat at the nursery on Thursday mornings or sent by e-mail: ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au or posted to Pat at 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte, 3113.

Phoenix (Rising from the Ashes)

By Allwyne Buntine

Tears ran down his dirty face making furrows as they went.
His sobbing shoulders heaved no more, for all his grief was spent.
He stood at the back of the burnt out wreckage that once was his family's home.
Here and there touched by whiteness, the remains of a fireman's foam.

A small scrawny boy with a shock of bright red hair,
Anxiously looking all about for any sign that she might be there.
He'd smelt the smoke of fire, and heard the fire trucks roar.
As he looked from his classroom window and then fled out the door.

Into the street he went, towards the source of his fear.
For where the fire was burning, his house was very near.
Down the road he ran, his feet barely touched the ground.
Until at last in the smokey fog, his own street he had found.

But there the fireman stopped him, and wouldn't let him through.
"But I must get there, I must get home, she won't know what to do."
"But my dog is there, she's in her kennel, still tied on her lead.
Someone's got to get her out, she'll be killed if she doesn't get freed."

Just then a mighty wind picked up, and the fire roared.
The fireman grabbed the boy and with him jumped aboard
A waiting fire engine which raced along the street,
Carrying the grief stricken boy away from the searing heat.

After the fire had passed, and only smouldering embers remained,
The fireman took the boy, back to his house again.
He watched the heart broken figure walk up the garden path,
Through the blackened scenery of the fire's aftermath.

And then he saw him crying as he went on out the back,
Passed the burnt out wreckage along a little track.
There the boy stopped, and knelt down on the ground,
He had his back to the fireman who couldn't see what the boy had found.

A blackened piece of leather, the remains of a dog collar
Still buckled, and to his eyes there came a look of horror,
As he felt the anguish of his pet and the terror of her pain.
It would be many nights and many days before he was himself again.

During the weeks that followed, depression and sadness grew,
As he withdrew into himself, his parents knew not what to do.
The boy was very sad, his heart full of regret,
For the loss of all he'd had mostly for his pet.

As time passed the land was cleared, the devastation was no more,
The builders came the house rebuilt and the garden was restored.
But in the empty garden, the boy no solace found,
In every corner he saw his pet and heard her friendly sound.

They wanted to buy him another dog, but that was just the worst
How could they think another dog would ever replace the first.

Then one day he realised the sound he heard was true,
He turned and looked into the trusting eyes of a little dog that he felt he knew.
Just how sad he was and how he missed his pal,
And though she couldn't replace her, she would try to do as well.

Tentatively the boy reached out and touched a wiry head,
The dog's tail started wagging almost as though it said,
"Please take me to your heart, another I won't replace,
But a new life we can start, and together the future we'll face.

I was prompted to write this poem after hearing of the tragedy of one little boy in the devastating fires of Sydney this year. He had lost his dog in the fires and he was the one who discovered its body. He was suffering from depression and anxiety as a result and I sincerely hope that he is now recovering from his ordeal.

Allwyne Buntine



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Bull Ant

Family Formicoidea

Australian Bulldog Ants are considered to be among the most primitive of all ants. They are also the largest ants in the world, in Queensland they grow up to 35mm in length. While Bull Ants hunt and kill insects for their larvae, the adults themselves feed on nectar.

Encounters with Bull Ants are not uncommon in the Warrandyte bush. If you are unlucky enough to get stung by one (or more) it is a very painful experience. There is some confusion as to whether Bull Ants bite or sting. While they do have fierce-looking mandibles (jaws) for gripping, it is the sting on the end of the abdomen that inflicts the injury.

FOWSP Membership Form

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Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

Special Membership Offer

Receive a discount if you renew your membership for three years

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