

September 2003

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Introduced Moss Invades Warrandyte

By Pat Coupar

An introduced moss is invading the Warrandyte bushland. It is an attractive looking moss called *Pseudoscleropodium purum* or, if you prefer it, Neat Feather-moss which originated in the Northern Hemisphere.

Local fungi and bryophyte expert, Bruce Fuhrer has been aware of its presence here for sometime and last month took a group of Fowspians out to see the pest moss. The main purpose of the afternoon was to inform and educate our group about *Pseudoscleropodium purum*.

We met at the Pound Bend Picnic Reserve where Bruce gave a brief introduction before we headed off along the river track back towards the depot.

It didn't take very long before we came upon the first patch of the introduced moss growing in dense shade not far from the track. It was pale yellowish-green with, as the common name suggests, a feathery appearance. It was not unlike some of the native species to look at, and if you didn't know any different you would think that it belonged here.

But *Pseudoscleropodium purum* is a robust aggressive moss outcompeting more delicate native bryophytes, smothering native ground covers and inhibiting the germination of seedlings, particularly the small annual species like the buttercups (*Ranunculus* spp.) and pennyworts (*Hydrocotyle* spp.).

We tracked the infestation further into the bush. According to Bruce, the moss has been moving at a rapid rate. One patch, he noted, had doubled in size in only two years. How does it

spread? Bruce has never actually seen the moss fruiting so he surmises that it is spread vegetatively possibly by birds.

While we are used to treating a variety of troublesome introduced weeds, we have had no experience of dealing with an introduced moss. Bruce has suggested trialling herbicides on the invader. And that is exactly what the Manningham City Council bushland managers are doing. They have been conducting trials using a quarter strength Glyphosate (RoundUp) on a patch of the introduced moss in the 100 Acres Reserve at Park Orchards.

It is hoped that as other land managers become aware of the problem they will be equally as proactive. At the very least a survey should be carried out to map the occurrence and extent of the potentially serious invader as well as regular monitoring to determine it's spread.

The introduced moss has also been found in the Otways, around Portland and at Cement Creek in the Yarra Ranges National Park.



Planting at Brushy Creek Wonga Park When the Wattles are in Bloom

By Flora Anderson

Sunday 17th August saw 30 people, all ages, gathered for an "Early Spring" Planting which would honour the memory of William Barak on the centenary of his death on August 15th 1903 at Coranderrk.

It was a lovely, mild day. Everybody quickly found a job to do as Park staff Andy, Glen, Pat and Barry already had all the necessary bits and pieces in place. There were, I think, about 300 plants in boxes, tree guards, diggers, stakes, mallets, drinking water, orange juice and even a portable loo. The BBQ was standing at attention waiting for lunchtime.

Unlike poor, neglected, abused Wittons Reserve, all this area on the riparian zone of Brushy Creek needed was some re-vegetation with middle storey and some sedges. We were pleased to see good areas of Weeping Grass intact and no serious weed invasion.

FOWSP was represented as was Wonga Park Environment Group. Greening Australia members were there too. Tammy, Norm Hunter's daughter drove right across Melbourne with her little daughter Georgia to represent Barak's family.

Just before lunch Glen gathered everyone together and Mick and Margaret Woiwod

produced an Aboriginal flag which, draped on a tree and backlit in the filtered sunshine, looked beautifully impressive.

Glen introduced the guests of honour from the Wurundjeri and Barry welcomed us to his ancestor's country. We were deeply conscious that Barak, the last chief of his tribe, would have witnessed decimation of his people through white man's diseases, dislocation and loss of their land.

Mick Woiwod, author and historian felt from an early age the need to learn the Aboriginal Story and, in his pleasant style of story telling gave his reasons for thinking this place at the confluence of the Yarra and Brushy Creek was so important. He believes Barak was born in the vicinity. Where two streams meet, Mick told us the spirits of unborn children hover over the water.

And sitting there with that quiet audience in that beautiful place, I have to admit to mixed emotions. Predominantly though, having witnessed all those young Australians lovingly replacing a little of what had been there in Barak's day, a feeling of happiness and hope.

No Grants

FOWSP has been unsuccessful in its grant applications to the Parks Victoria 2003/2004 Community Grants Program.

Two projects we submitted, one was a joint application with RMIT University for developing a 'Fieldwork Base Camp Research and Visitor Facility' at the old dairy site at Stane Brae. It was an inspirational project which had great potential for providing facilities for education and research to a wide variety of environmental groups.

The other application was for funding the publication of a series of three colour brochures on fungi, mosses and lichens. This was a particular disappointment as the brochures were to complement our very successful wattle, eucalypt and wildflower brochures for which we obtained funding last year from Parks Victoria.

However, after discussion, the FOWSP committee has decided to fund the publishing of the brochures ourselves. Local fungi and bryophyte expert Bruce Fuhrer has already put in a considerable time documenting and photographing the fungi, mosses and lichens of Warrandyte and we feel this valuable work must be supported.

Apparently Parks Victoria were inundated with applications for grants this year and unfortunately we missed out on both counts.



Bush Backyard

Contributions this month from Sandy Jones and Pat Coupar.

Drawings by Melanie Coupar

Morning Visits

By Sandy Jones

Every morning at about 8.30 to 9.00am I head out of the back door (whether the hot sun is beating down or it looks like snow) to feed my pet rabbit 'Sweetie'. Once fed, I settle down on my cushioned seat patting Sweetie and watch the adventures of our neighbourhood bird life.



There's our Magpie family, Mum, Dad and kids – eyes darting across the lawn for that next worm or fat slug. Not far behind are the Noisy Miners looking for the small bugs attached to the gum trees. And who couldn't

miss the flock of lorrikeets fighting for position on the bird feeder to see who can eat the seed first – that's if the pair of Galahs don't get in first! Then there is also the morning Cockatoos who want to get their breakfast first.

Let's not forget our community family of Bronzewing. They are there to pick up the left over seed, keeping them company are our local pair of Eastern Rosellas.

It's a pleasure to watch them each morning. Having been born and bred in Warrandyte I never take their visits for granted.

Bulbine Bonanza

By Pat Coupar

The Leek Lily (*Bulbine* aff. *semibarbata*) is a rare plant in Warrandyte and of regional significance. Unlike its more common relative Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*) which occurs in most areas of the Park, the Leek Lily is only found on a few sheltered rockfaces of the Jumping Creek.

However, it is popping up everywhere in my

garden. A couple of years ago I planted one or two of the rare lilies grown from seed at the nursery. While a few seedlings appeared last year, this season has seen a massive germination. I have been madly potting up the smaller ones and direct transplanting the larger ones. Soon my garden will be full of Leek Lilies.

But the Leek Lily is a short-lived plant so I don't know how long my Bulbine bonanza will last. Hopefully though, next year the young Bulbines will do what their parents did this year and produce profuse offspring!!



Baby Snatching

By Pat Coupar (pers. comm next door neighbour)

We have a resident Brush-tail Possum – it's the one that chews my newly-planted daisies and Pelargoniums and also, sometimes, some of my epiphytic orchids. It comes down from the trees just after dark landing with a thump onto our balcony.

Our neighbour, Mark, is also visited regularly by the possum. The other day he told me a remarkable story of an event that took place recently. The possum, a female, had appeared one evening as usual, but this time a baby was clinging to her back. Suddenly in front of Mark's eyes, out of nowhere, a large owl (almost certainly a Powerful Owl) swooped down and grabbed the baby possum off its mother's back and flew away with it.

The poor bereft 'brushie' made a few circuits of the garden looking for her lost baby before disappearing back into the trees.

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

Letters to the Editor

I enjoyed Olive's descriptions of the birds in her Templestowe garden. In Bulleen as well there are delights. The most encouraging change over the last three years has been visits from Thornbills. In the late mornings and afternoons, tiny twitterings and lightning zips among the foliage stirred me into frustrating searches and identification drives which at last led to certainty. Striated Thornbills are busy among the Melaleucas and the Wonga Vine. I will definitely NOT attack this over enthusiastic creeper with saw or chopper.

These little visitors are preceded in the mornings by Butcher Bird ringing calls and, Magpie cantatas. Then the Red Wattlebirds and Striated Honeyeaters (or Little Wattlebirds-a silly name for a bird with no Wattles) sweep through.

Finally a burst of screeches and brilliant colours proclaims the Rainbow Lorikeets. The morning has begun.

Elizabeth Sevier

I read with interest, Lynda Hamilton's article 'Blacks are Back'. I too have really enjoyed waking each morning to their most distinctive call, and recently, like Lynda, watched a large flock - I lost count at about 40 - flying overhead.

I have friends who live in a luxurious apartment in Ivanhoe. They regularly invite me to dinner and insist I stay the night, rather than drive home after a few glasses of wine. And although they have a nice little outdoor area, a high fence is only 12 feet away. I do so miss waking up and looking out the window and seeing the bush down to the river and over to North Warrandyte.

Even more I miss the bird calls - along with the recent Black Cockatoos, I hear Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Galahs, Eastern Rosellas, Rainbow Lorikeets, Kookaburras, Magpies, Mudlarks, Grey Butcher-birds, Currawongs to name but some. Who would want to live anywhere else!

I also enjoy the company of at least four Brush-tail Possums. One regularly sleeps in my garage and another in my garden shed.

Harking back to the Black Cockatoos, just as I was approaching Tindals Road from Harris Gully Road recently, two Black Cockatoos flew across the road just ahead of me, and to my consternation a third followed heading straight for my passenger side window. Fortunately for us both he realized just in time the necessity to gain height and flew out of range. To have hit him was a disaster that does not bear thinking about.

Please don't print any more poems like "Phoenix (rising from the ashes)" for a while. It was beautiful, but so sad. I bawled my eye out! My congratulations to Allwyne Buntine for her talent.

Edith E. Irving

Lynda Hamilton mentioned last issue about 35 Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos in Warrandyte, despite rumours of declining numbers.

By comparison, this species has had a population explosion in the outer eastern suburbs in the last few years. Previously rare, they now number up to 100 or more per flock in Ringwood and surrounding areas.

I recall the species as seasonal visitors to Montrose (where I lived) up until about ten years ago. They subsequently took up permanent residence and bred locally. They have spread and I now see them daily in Bayswater North, eating pine nuts at this time of year.

Little Corellas and Rainbow Lorikeets have undergone very similar changes over the same period, having been effectively absent from the Melbourne area until fairly recently. Perhaps they have learned to adapt to urbanisation, or perhaps in some cases they are being forced out of formerly preferable habitat. I observe Rainbow Lorikeets ganging up against rosellas, so I suspect they represent a risk to some indigenous parrots of the region.

Graeme Lorimer



Zoological Meanings

Bell Miner

Manorina melanophrys

"Black-browed thin-nose"

My Worst Weed

By Lynda Hamilton

I agree with Joy Dahl that the Wandering Jew is a particularly tiresome weed, especially because it is so tenacious! (Can I be greedy and use the one article to describe my passionate dislike for two Best Worst Weeds?) However, there are two other tenacious weedy specimens that I admire as much as I loathe - ivy and sour grass (Oxalis)!

Let me start with ivy. Why oh why are nurseries allowed to sell this stuff is beyond me. Ivy is the plant that people buy or grow from cuttings when they are keen to screen something (usually ugly). They buy the plant (usually small in size) with good intentions of training it and keeping it tidy.

BUT, people move on with their good intentions and other people move in. Over the years the used-to-be-small-and-Oh-what-a-great-idea-to-hide-the-shed-non-threatening-plant takes on a life of its own. It spreads, it grows its tentacle-like fronds into small cracks and crevices, it remains extremely difficult to remove (and so people don't), and it creates a terrible dust when you do try to remove it. Nothing is safe from it, be it bricks and mortar, garden beds, trees).



What was once bought as a good 'screening' plant planted to hide something unsightly has become a cancer leaving death and even more unsightly spots - have you ever seen a beautiful tree choking to death by ivy?

Now on to sour grass. Having only been in Warrandyte a little over 12 months, I did some gardening last spring (in fact it was a major overhaul filling an eight cubic metre bin!). Feeling very pleased with myself having 'bush fire proofed' the garden (all 3¼ acres), I sat back to start planning what to do with the land and what to plant.

Over the past couple of months I have been dismayed to watch as all this #@\$/!* sour grass has taken over most of the property - garden beds, the lawn, even areas where soil doesn't exist! What pretty yellow flowers! What a lovely shade of green! What a pain in the gardener's tooth!



As you would know the only chemical-free way of dealing with this stuff is to remove it flowers, leaves, stems, roots and bulbs (and no, they're not like daffodil bulbs, easily dug up in a lump - they are tiny little clusters of difficult-to-see-let-alone-remove bulbs). Easier said than done if you wish to keep part of the soil for future gardening! UGH!

Still that's what I've been doing - filling bags with flowers, leaves, stems, roots, bulbs and soil. A dismal attempt at removing this ghastly weed. Sadly, if I am to remain sane I will need to resort to Zero or some such herbicide. Given the tenacity of sour grass, I will be battling on over the next eight years or so!

More on Oxalis

By Olive Walters

I have two gardens so I have two worst weeds. In my Templestowe garden I have waged war against Oxalis for sixteen years. I've tried digging, pulling, mulching and chemical weed-killer, but I'm still losing the battle. This year it seems to be particularly luxuriant and is smothering even Bulbine Lilies. Help!

Next Month Olive describes the worst weed of her Queensland garden.

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.

Tip of the Month - Replace Weedy Wattles with Locals

For Cootamundra Wattle plant Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) in dry areas, or Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) in moist areas. Both these local species have similar fern-like, true leaves and sprays of fluffy yellow balls similar to the Cootamundra Wattle. For Sallow Wattle and Floribunda Wattle plant Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*), Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*) and Hop Wattle (*Acacia stricta*) in dry areas and Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*) in moister shady areas. All these indigenous species, like their introduced counterparts, have phyllodes (flattened leaf stalks) rather than true leaves and pale yellow flower balls.

Contact the nursery manager for availability of these species.

Manningham City Council Environmental Seminars - June 2003

Report by Michelle Hanslow

Flowering Patterns of Melliferous (nectar-producing) Eucalypts by Melanie Birtchnell

This was the topic for Melanie Birtchnell's Honours Research. Very little research had been done on the flowering patterns of eucalypts until Melanie stepped in! The main problem with studying this issue is that the patterns occur over a very long time, and most research projects are relatively short-term. Ecological and reproductive cycles occur over five years or more - longer than most research institutions are prepared to fund.

Eucalypts are the largest genus of plants with over 500 species worldwide. They arose in the Oligocene epoch around 38-23 million years ago. Their flowering patterns are affected by several factors, the main ones being temperature and rainfall. Day length, tree size, age, bud size and bud predation also affect flowering. To establish reliable patterns of flowering, rainfall data should span at least 30 years and temperature variations should be monitored over 5-10 years. This is a particularly long time for any researcher to commit to, so data needed to be sourced from other locations.

The Forests Commission has Quarterly Budding and Flowering Reports, whilst apiarists (bee keepers) have a lifetime of information stored away in their heads or in their own private notes. The apiary profession is slowly dying out in Australia, as the younger generations are tending to head off to University rather than blindly following in the family traditions. Apiarists are traditionally very secretive with their information on flowering eucalypts as it determines their livelihood. However, they are realistic and see what is happening to the industry and have realised that some of their knowledge may need to be passed on to those outside of their family.

The aim of Melanie's project was to access the depth of long-term knowledge held by the apiarists, relating to the flowering patterns of the Victorian melliferous eucalypts.

She interviewed 25 apiarists each of whom had operated for a minimum of 30 years and had managed a minimum of 350 hives. She also visited the forest reserves where they kept some of their hives. These were predominantly Box-Ironbark forests in the Riverina area.

Apiarists have specialised knowledge gained through years of experience and they can predict which trees will be flowering at least 18 months in advance! They do this by assessing the length of the new bright green leaf growth. Big growth spurts indicate good bud production. Drought and heat stress can lead to bud drop. The apiarists also look at the length of time since the last good crop.

Twenty-eight eucalypt species were studied. River Red Gum (*Eucalypts camaldulensis*) was used by 24 of the apiarists, so it is probably the most reliable flowering eucalypt and most abundant in nectar production. Alpine Ash (*E. delagatensis*) was another that was well used. Nineteen of the species researched had never been covered by previous studies.

Red Stringybark (*E. macrorhyncha*) has been known to flower 7 years apart - very erratic. There are spatial changes and site variations, so that at one site a species may flower every 3 years, but at another site, the same species may flower every 4 years. Drier sites usually had less frequent flowering. Erratic flowering leads to spasmodic reproduction, thus it is hard to know when to collect seed.

Flowering Period

Timing and duration varies between species. As a general rule, there is a staggering of the flowering period of about 6 weeks as you move from the north down to the south - probably due to the fact that it warms up in the north earlier and warmer temperatures induce flowering. Altitude can also affect flowering in the same way.

Flowering Intensity

Trees along roadsides have increased flower production because of increased pollinators, light, and temperature (edge effect).

Mature trees also tend to produce a greater volume of buds than younger trees (15 of the 25 apiarists agreed with this). It can take many years to reach budding stage - up to 40 years - which contradicts previous research that has been done. Such information should be of interest to forestry people, for seed trees, reproduction and habitat.

Another weird but wonderful piece of information that Melanie discovered was that apiarists can tell by 'the sound of the forest' whether it is flowering or not. Thinking about this, we might assume that there would be the noise of bees, so it would be louder when in flower. However, the opposite is true! The forests are quiet when in flower because the birds aren't fighting to find nectar! Amazing.



By B.G

Euphoric Effect

On returning from our three month road/motel, May/August trip via Burra S.A, Alice Springs (6 weeks), Tennant Ck, Camooweal, Mt Isa, Cloncurry, Charters Towers, Townsville (2½ weeks), MacKay, Clermont, Emerald, Roma, Moree, Dubbo and Albury, our euphoria was suppressed by 7 days of Melbourne grey clouds and icy cold. But the application of one day at WSP set things right.

Nature Nips Nursery (Not Negligence)

Whilst we were away many nursery plants were withered by a minus 3.7° Celsius frost, the wood ducks "got stuck into" the lilies, the wallabies and kangaroos entered the shade house for a "vegetation feast" (quote Marion the taller), and the cockies wreaked havoc with the Dianellas. But with providence and people, more plant growing is taking place.

Frightening Faces

Another name is being applied to a group of eucalypts - *Corymbia* referring to Lemon-scented, Spotted and Flowering Gums, possibly others. Is all this culling necessary? Could someone explain the detail?

Source: 3MP 1377

Roving Rangers

Andy Nixon and Glen Jameson are away at a Rangers "something-or-other" in South Africa. Back by the end of the month.

Plant Purposes

At the depot, early September, Rosanne Pirotta was buying many plants to get her "and Martin's" garden growing (but they will also have roses).

Trish Bottomley was also buying a variety of plants with a double purpose. Her son Liam is "doing Botany at La Trobe" and one of his exercises is to take one part of many indigenous plants and to identify the plant family from the plant part. The rest of the plant, roots attached, will then be planted in the garden for aesthetic purposes.

Future of Flora

Flora Anderson, presently our Public Officer, is putting her place at Wonga Park on the market in early October. Flora will be spending her time between Airey's Inlet and North Melbourne.

As yet Flora isn't a barracker for any Footy team, but all things are possible.

Corp Caught

The Green Corps bus was bogged (it is said) at Stane Brae/Yarra Brae. How many Rangers were needed to rescue this vehicle? Apparently the bus was being driven by the Green Corps team leader. No names given.

Herse Has Travelled

Karalyn Herse has travelled from/to Malaysia, Werribee, Townsville etc and has completed a degree in Botany and Anthropology.

Karalyn is employed by Greening Australia and is the Green Corps team leader. The Corps will be around until Christmas.

Travellers Tales

Seen at the nursery shelter, Joan MacMahon with a large map of Italy, describing her travels. Also Ray Clarke's photographs of his Gibb River Road travels.

Points on Participants

Two members of the Green Corp are Adam Lanford who is ex-Upwey High and lives in Belgrave. Aged 18 this month he wants accreditation and hopes to join the army in the future.

Ashley Miller, 20 years, went to Lilydale College, did one year of natural resources course at Swinburne (Lilydale), and lives at Mt Evelyn. Ashley is interested in plants/nurseries/natives and would like a job as a Ranger.

Boomers Bounty

Monday 1st September, a large group of walkers from North Ringwood Community House, led by Shirley Deane walked carefully through the Boomers Reserve area (Parks Victoria). Mining had left many small washouts, partly hidden just under the soil surface. Nearby were Early Nancy's, Spreading Wattles, patches of Scented Sundews with pea-sized white flowers, a greenhood, Blue Caladenia, Prickly Moses, Hovea and Maidenhair Fern.





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Early Nancy

(Wurmbea dioica)

Early Nancy has been flowering for several weeks now. One of the first of our local lilies to flower, it is often called the 'Harbinger of Spring'. Each six-petalled white flower has a distinct purple band around the centre, male and female flowers are different and usually occur on separate plants.

Early Nancy grows in most areas of the Park – a good place to see it is on the slopes and ridges of Fourth Hill and Timber Reserve.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

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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

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