

October 2003

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Bridal Creeper Under Attack

By Pat Coupar

Bridal Creeper, also known as Smilax, or for those who prefer scientific terminology *Asparagus asparagoides*, is one of Warrandyte's major environmental weeds. It is listed among Australia's twenty 'Weeds of National Significance'. Although there is legislation to control it in Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales, as yet this does not exist in Victoria and the plant is still allowed to be sold in nurseries.

Originally introduced for ornamental purposes, this aggressive creeper has spread to many areas - mainly by seeds contained in berries eaten by birds. Ironically Bridal Creeper, like another environmental weed - Agapanthus, is now quite rare in its native South Africa.

Bridal Creeper thrives in damp, shady places as well as disturbed sites such as along roadsides, smothering and outcompeting most indigenous vegetation. While it is a perennial, growing from a dense multi-tuberous rootstock, leaves and stems die back over summer, shooting again after Autumn rains.

Until recently control of Bridal Creeper in Warrandyte has either been by mechanical or chemical means. However, thanks to research carried out at the Keith Turnbull Research Institute (KTRI) at least two biological control agents have been tested and approved for release - a leaf hopper and a rust

fungus - both have been introduced to infestations in selected areas of Warrandyte.

The rust, in particular, has proved to be quite successful in controlling the spread of Bridal Creeper. However, it needs to be understood that biological control alone is unlikely to eradicate the weed, but should be used in conjunction with other control methods.

In June 2001 the rust fungus was released by staff from KTRI and Park rangers in the Stane Brae section of Warrandyte State Park. It has been monitored carefully and in the two years since the release, has spread about 250 metres. There is now enough to harvest the rust and redistribute it to other areas.

In August this year a training day was held at Warrandyte to teach land managers and volunteers how to collect the rust spores for release at other sites.



Sarah Holland Clift, Project Officer for Gorse and Bridal Creeper at KTRI, gave the group an introduction to the biology of the Bridal Creeper and the rust, before going out to Stane Brae. On site she demonstrated how to recognise mature spore pustules and how to collect, transport and release them.

It was a very informative day and the interest shown by the people who attended is a good indication that biological war has well and truly been declared on Warrandyte's Bridal Creeper.

Sighted at Last in WSP!!!!

By Cath Andrew

Well, they appear in lots of photos of our trip to the UK recently. *Fratercula artica* (Atlantic Puffin). These little clowns with huge parrot-like bills, kept us amused and amazed for hours. While we stood in cold wind on dangerous cliffs, overlooking their burrows, they came in from the sea, with beaks full of small fish - such as sprats, herring and sand eels.

The body of the puffin is only about 30cms long and has a very short wingspan. In flight they seem to exert an enormous amount of energy but their dimensions do enable them to swim under water.

There are an estimated 450,000 pairs of puffins in Britain. As with the other sea birds we



Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula artica*)

observed, variable food supplies, rats, feral cats, oil and other sea pollutants, threaten them.

On our arrival in England we joined the RSPB, which enabled us to visit many of their reserves such as Bempton cliffs in East Yorkshire, Snettisham and Titchwell Marsh in Norfolk, Loch Garten and Loch Ruthven in the highlands and the Orkney Islands. The London Wetlands Centre, a reclaimed quarry on the Thames River, was a good place to become familiar with the local wildlife. It had a three storey bird hide with a lift!

Our favourite bird site was on the Farne Islands off the Northumberland coast near Bamburgh Head. Although it was quite touristy (mostly other

birdos), the numbers are controlled and birds monitored for stress. Staple Island and Inner Farne are home to thousands of Guillemots, Kittiwakes, Puffins, Shags, Razorbills, Arctic Terns and Sandwich Terns. The other islands are off limits in the breeding season.

Marshes, meadows and locks provided us with hours of peaceful entertainment watching and photographing, Slavian Grebes, Ospreys, Golden Eagles, Dippers (that walk under water) and 'helicopter birds' (skylarks).

The Orkney Islands, north of the Scottish mainland, with their variety of cliffs, marshes and moors, made a compact, easily accessible place for viewing birds. The good soil supports lots of invertebrates and flat nesting areas are plentiful. The confluence of the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea provides a rich food source. The RSPB is the biggest landowner in the Orkneys with 11 reserves, totalling 8,000 ha. Although we saw only a few Puffins, Gannets, Fulmars, Arctic Skuas (one of Britains rarest breeding birds) Guillemots, and Razorbills were abundant. In the moorland Hen Harriers and Kestrels preyed on Orkney voles and Skylarks. Lots of Curlews, Dunlins, Eider Ducks, Red breasted Mergansers, the majestic and shy Red Throated Divers and Oystercatchers by the thousands.

Like elsewhere in the world, there has been a decline in marshland and the drainage of lakes. Harvesting of farmland (of which there is much in the Orkneys) means camouflaged eggs and chicks of Oystercatchers, Ringed Plovers and Curlews succumb to machinery. The presence of well-intended birdwatchers and over-fishing all take their toll.

Many of the Northern Hemisphere birds we became familiar with over the two months were of the larger, more obvious and more stationary varieties. We had difficulty 'getting our eyes in' for Buntings, Twits or elusive Nuthatches and the like. We heard lots!

So if you are keen on birds and have several spare dollars, join the one million strong RSPB and visit some of their 160 nature reserves in the UK.



Razorbill (*Alca torda*)

Platypus Increase in Mullum Mullum Creek

A recent trapping survey conducted by the Australian Platypus Conservancy, in conjunction with Manningham Council and local volunteers, has identified eleven platypus along Mullum Mullum Creek.

The all-night research session has yielded the highest number of platypus since surveys commenced in 1995.

Manningham Mayor Cr John Bruce said the growing evidence that platypus are re-colonising along Mullum Mullum Creek is very exciting news. "Over the last few years, Council, local environment groups and Melbourne Water have all contributed to improving habitat along the creek. As a result, it is great to think that more and more of Manningham's residents have this very special species living close to them."

Cr Bruce said that as encouraging as the news is, more work needs to be done to improve the local environment. "One of the platypus found during the survey had a scar around its neck, suggesting that it had been entangled in rubbish of some sort. Eliminating litter from our environment is a simple but important way to help our wildlife," he said.

Mr Geoff Williams, a biologist with the Australian Platypus Conservancy, said the record result was very pleasing. "Both juveniles

identified in a similar survey last February were found to be alive and well, having survived any problems caused by last summer's dry conditions."

"The really positive news was that, compared to previous findings, more than half the platypus were recorded well upstream of Mullum Mullum Creek's junction with the Yarra River. In particular, two males were found on the outskirts of Mitcham - the first time that more than one animal has been confirmed in the Donvale/Mitcham survey area. One of the two has been resident in this section for a couple of years."

"However, the other one was originally identified as a juvenile in Ruffey Creek, Lower Templestowe in 2001 and has travelled some 15 kilometres to find adult territory in Mullum Mullum Creek," Mr Williams said.

Follow-up surveys will be conducted in autumn to build on findings of the recent session.



My Worst Weed

By Olive Walters

In my Queensland garden my worst weed is known as 'Cobbler's Pegs' (*Bidens pilosa*) Family Asteraceae. Between my visits it grows and matures and one of my first jobs in the garden is to remove this pest. The mature seeds have two little hooks which allow the seeds to cling to anything which brushes against them, large numbers of seeds also fall to the ground. After rain these germinate in their hundreds and its been raining in southern Queensland! I'm dreading my first glimpse of my neglected garden with all those little dry seeds waiting to attach themselves to me.



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.

The Kimberley's Mornington Wilderness Sanctuary

By Ray Clarke

For over two hundred years Australians have been plundering and despoiling the continent in the apparent belief that its resources are without limit. Rarely has a voice been raised in caution.

A wakening awareness of the imminence of catastrophes in the realms of land, forest, wildlife, rivers and seas took place, I believe, in the Save the Franklin campaign 25 years ago. The stubborn, and ultimately successful, efforts of the "greenies", and the dissemination throughout Australia of reports from the Tasmanian wilderness and pictures such as Rock Island Bend by Peter Dombrovskis at last brought the word "ecology" to the attention of the public.

Since then a number of non-profit organisations have commenced acquiring land and taking steps to protect threatened species and environments. One such is Birds Australia with their South Australian property Gluepot which is being fenced exclude feral animals and to foster the mallee fowl and other species of birds and animals in decline.

Probably the most successful of these organisations is the Perth-based Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) which has twelve properties under ownership and management. They are in Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. The latter are from Karakamia in the south to Mornington in the Kimberley. The total area owned by AWC is

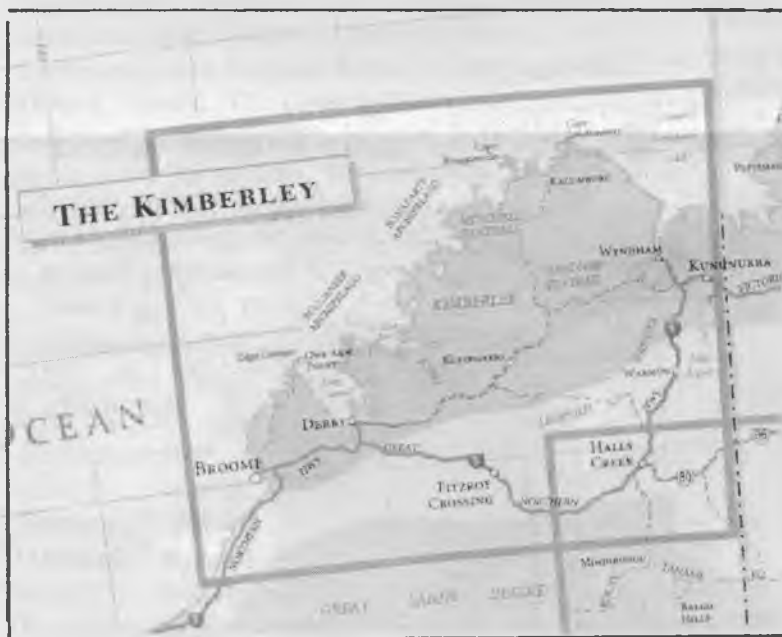
575,000 hectares (1.3 million acres). Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary comprises 312,000 hectares in the catchment of the Fitzroy River was acquired 2½ years ago. It is in the heart of an area recognised as one of the world's last true wilderness regions. Here a bush camp has been established 95 kilometres south from the Gibb River Road (accessible only by 4WD) to provide camping and safari-style accommodation for the public.

My son and I have recently spent four days living in the comfortable and spacious tent-like cabins with bedroom, outside deck, a well-fitted bathroom with toilet and shower, and another space for refrigerator and tea making facilities. Excellent meals were enjoyed at the central open air bar and dining room.

The great attractions of the visit were the rugged country of massive bluffs and mesas evidence of ages old geological history, the Fitzroy River, barely running at present, but with long deep-water stretches. Diamond Gorge is accessible by canoe and Sir John Gorge by road. They provide wonderful opportunities for watchers of bird and animal life, rock scrambling and swimming.

The objectives of the AWC for the vast property include gradual de-stocking of cattle on the property, the study of bird and animal life with special enquiries into the reasons for the decline in populations of animals and birds. This will involve habitat mapping and the conduct of targeted biological surveys. They have enlisted the aid of scientists specialising in the ecology. These include Tim Flannery and CSIRO scientists. AWC recently announce a gift of \$600,000 by Mike Fidler to help save the endangered Gouldian Finch in northern Australia.

For anyone proposing to visit the Kimberley and to travel the Gibb River Road, I would strongly advise making time to visit the Mornington Wilderness Camp and Sanctuary



Bookings for camping or for the cabins should be made in advance by phone (08)9191 7406, or email mornington@australianwildlife.org the web site is www.australianwildlife.org

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.

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

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.

Forthcoming Events

FOWSP 21st Birthday Celebrations

Sunday 7th December

Details in next newsletter

AGM

Wednesday 3rd December

Place: Lee & Geoff Speedy's house, 69 Research-Warrandyte Rd, Nth Warrandyte

All members welcome. BYO chair



FOWSP Committee 2003

Flora Anderson 9722 1776 Public Officer
Pat Coupar 9844 1650 Newsletter Editor
Ray Clarke 9841 8507 Treasurer
Sue Shepherd 9844 3754 Assistant Treasurer
Peter Curry 9844 0958 Secretary
Lee Speedy 9437 0894 Membership Secretary
Mike Coupar 9844 1650
Melanie Birtchnell
Karen Reynolds 9712 0797
Joan MacMahon 9844 3213
Michelle Hanslow 0402251577

Wildlife Rescue
Julie Pryor 9722 1117

Market
Marie Krause 9712 0498

Park Office 9844 2659

Nursery Manager 0408800026

The next FOWSP committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 29th October at 7.30pm at Joan MacMahon's house, 101 Bradleys Lane, Warrandyte Nth

Green Wedge Environmental Seminar Series 2003

Thursday 6 November - "Orchid Conservation in Victoria"

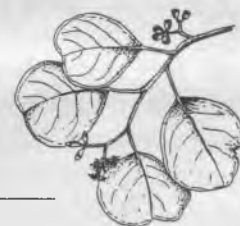
Speaker: Dick Thompson, Vice President Australasian Native Orchid Society. Dick will talk about his work on recovery programs for rare and threatened orchid species, and some issues in orchid conservation around the state.

Time: 7.30pm **Venue:** The Function Room, Club Warrandyte (Warrandyte Pub), 120 Yarra Street, Warrandyte 3113 (Melways ref: 23 11E)

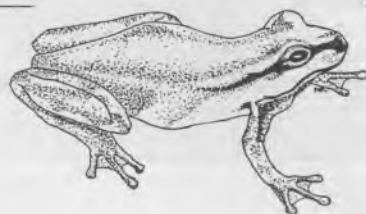
Thursday 4 December - "Phytophthora (cinnamon Fungus)"

Speaker: Ian Smith, Senior Forest Pathologist, Forest Science Centre, Department of Sustainability and Environment. Ian will discuss the latest research into dieback caused by Phytophthora, occurrences in our area, and how we can prevent its spread.

For further information contact about the seminars contact:
Cathy Willis – Conservation Officer. Ph: 9840 9122
Email: cathy.willis@manningham.vic.gov.au



**Deadline for the November newsletter is
November 9th**



The Silent Hunter

By David Farrar

It was June 2003, after 5pm, and the sun was falling. I was looking for any sign of rabbit activity near a fenceline at Pound Bend orchard site. On foot and with binoculars in hand, I was on a terrace about thirty metres from the Yarra River and not far from the remaining apple trees that have survived removal over the years.

From upstream, less than one hundred metres away, it came. I caught sight of the bird with brilliant flashes of colour. Late afternoon light makes most objects appear sharper in colour and I could pick out a glimpse of a brown golden collar. By the way the bird was flying - straight and direct, just over a metre off the ground - I recognised an old friend. It was a Brown Goshawk (*Accipiter fasciatus*).

I was wide-awake with excitement at seeing this spectacle once again. With determined flight the Goshawk targeted the edge of the young gums that had been planted a few years before. I couldn't see what the Goshawk was after, but I was sure that it was hunting.

The Goshawk ploughed into the leaves of a young gum and there was a flash of brilliant colours everywhere. The colours were from more than thirty Eastern Rosellas exploding with fright and screams of surprise. With the failing light it was a deadly colourful arrangement of panic.

My concentration back on the Goshawk, I could see it had hit its prey. Then cartwheeling wildly, it landed and mantled the prey held in the right talon that moments before had stretched out to grab one of the Eastern Rosellas like a cricketer in a slips.

As the Goshawk mantled the prey and looked to shake its head from the cartwheel and regain its focus, the noise of other birds erupted. Two Magpies were flying in, but the Goshawk didn't look too perturbed by the incoming birds. I didn't see the Goshawk lower its bill onto the Rosella. I knew it didn't need to. The Rosella was already dead from the impact wounds of the Goshawk's talons.

After a minute the Goshawk gained its composure and took off in the direction from which it had come. With Magpies in pursuit and Wattlebirds now joining in, the Goshawk disappeared into the large gums along the Yarra River. I had identified the Goshawk as an adult and as the bird flew off with its prey I decided (because of its size compared to the Rosella) the



Brown Goshawk was a female (females Brown Goshawks weigh 570grams and males weigh 350grams). I wanted to observe the Goshawk feeding but the silent hunter was gone.

I was eighteen when I observed my first Brown Goshawk hunting at the Werribee sewerage farm. That Goshawk was an immature bird and missed its prey and, with my lower powered binoculars back then, I couldn't work out the entire hunting story. I enjoyed 18 months helping to trap and band Brown Goshawks at the Werribee Sewerage farm and this was a wonderful experience.

Last May I received a call to pick up a hawk from a residence in North Warrandyte. On arrival I saw a first year Brown Goshawk hanging upside down on twine in a chicken coop. The chickens and pigeons in the coop didn't appear to be too worried by this young Goshawk which had somehow managed to get itself entwined but luckily was uninjured. I grabbed the Goshawk by the talons, handling the bird carefully and checked her over. The family watched the release and enjoyed the Goshawk taking flight and had learnt something new about one of my favourite birds of prey.

Recently Barry Dowling (The Age Wildlife writer) referred to raptors in the CBD. The Brown Goshawk featured as he talked about his new enthusiasm for raptor identification.

In the last few days I have observed a Brown Goshawk and male Collared-Sparrow Hawk flying by during morning and evening walks near my place in North Balwyn.

Warrandyte State Park News October 2003

By Ranger David 'Frankie' Farrar.

I herd a Paul Kelly song (Carless) the other day while planning an activity and it went like this:

*"How many cabs in New York City,
How many angles on a pin,
How many tunes in a saxophone,
How many cheers in a bottle of Gin,
How many stars in the Milky Way,
How many words can you write with a pen?"*

And I thought.....How many Koalas in Pound Bend? This leads me to schedule another Koala count and BBQ at Pound Bend at Warrandyte State Park on Saturday 8th November starting at 10:00am.

Please meet at the Folly and bring binoculars, supporting footwear and a hat. Parks Victoria will supply sunscreen and a BBQ lunch including drinks



I would be greatly appreciate support with this activity as I am trying to obtain a more accurate count this year of the Pound Bend

Koalas and ascertain if the numbers have declined because of drought effects and old age mortality in some Koalas. I personally know of nine that have died in the last two years. The count has been scheduled to coincide with breeding making it a great opportunity to observe a female Koala with young. And pending weather, a good time to also view the many bird species the Park has to offer.

If you would like to help with this great activity give me a call at the Park office on 9844 2659 to make a booking.

Volunteers Forum

**Tuesday 11th November 6.30pm to 9.30pm (including a barbeque)
At Westerfolds Park depot, off Fitzsimons Lane, Templestowe**

This forum is an opportunity for groups to share their experiences and information. There will be space for groups to set up displays.

For more information contact Joanne Nelson on 8846 4000

More Please

Contributions needed for the following segments

Bush Backyard

Your Worst Weed

Food for Thought

My Favourite Place





By B.G

Popular People

A 'Spring Outdoors' walk in the, Manningham Council's program on October 12th was completely booked out well before the event. It was a wildflower walk on Fourth Hill led by our ever-active members Cathy Willis and Josh Revell.

September Supporters

Helping at the market stall were John Hanson, Lee Speedy, Marion Thomson, Neil Tessier, Betty Oke and Julie Bishop, but they weren't the only ones.

Press Publicity

One Thursday recently Justine Sywalk was at the depot doing a 'picture special' on the nursery and the Friends, using a long-nosed camera adroitly. Karen Hodge was there working as a 'senior journalist' interviewing FOWSP members. Justine and Karen are working for the Manningham Leader.

Just Jogging

Alwyne Buntine was seen jogging along Warrandyte Road near Eastlands, wearing a bright mauve tracksuit. Alwyne is one of our regular Thursday helpers, and a poet as well.

Committee Confession

One of our newest committee members is Michelle Hanslow, a self-confessed brown-eyed, over 30's person with straightened curly hair of light copper-reddish colour. She is studying Natural Resource Management. Her ambition: "would like to see FOWSP take over the world, but to take over the local area first, to grow and expand, involving more people." Michelle drives an "old Subaru".

Pity the Perfect Ploy

Our nursery manager was seated one Thursday, a pair of crutches at his side and surrounded by many women. Is that the way to be popular?

Peter's Path

Around 13th and 14th of September Peter Deane led about 12 Cubs through Whipstick Gully, on to

Fourth Hill and down to Black Flat. This is the third group he has taken through the year.

Rabbit Request

Please report any sightings of rabbits around the Park. Rabbits are down to very small numbers and we would like to eliminate them. (Request from Ranger David Farrar).

Roving Rangers

Ranger-in-Charge Andy Nixon will be back from South Africa sometime in October. Glen Jameson has also been in South Africa for several weeks and secretary Kay Williams is at Westerfolds Park.

Early Event

On 25th September a windy day at Warrandyte 'Frankie' Farrar, the duty Ranger was busy getting crews ready to assist with the fires in the Orbost area. The depot appeared empty of staff as some rangers were already heading to Orbost.

Frog Feature

Seen at the Anglesea 'Angair' wildflower show, Raelene Hobbs (Science degree majoring in zoology) working at the display for the Amphibian Research Centre, 03 9354 4718.

On show were six live frogs: Spotted Marsh Frog, Victorian Smooth Froglet, Southern Brown (Ewings) Tree Frog, Common Spadefoot Toad and the Banjo (Pobblebonk) Frog.

The Amphibian Research Centre is shifting to land and facilities, near the Water Discovery Centre at Werribee, that have been donated to them.

Perhaps FOWSP members interested in frogs might arrange someone to come out to the Park for a display, a slide show or some other activity.

Carnivorous Caterpillars

Liphya brassolis is a protected Australian butterfly. When the caterpillar invades green tree ant nests, devouring the brood, its feathery but flexible hide protects its soft underside from ant bites. (It feeds exclusively on the larvae of *Oecophylla*).

Once the adult butterfly emerges from its shield-like carapace, it is vulnerable to deadly attack by the ants. As it crawls from the ant nest it sheds masses of white deciduous scales from its wing surface, antennae and abdomen which sticks to the ants, addling them to distraction.

Source: *National Geographic*, June 2003.



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Waxlip Orchid

(Glossodia major)

This Spring has seen a wonderful display of our local orchids. The Waxlip is one of the more common species found on the slopes and ridges of Fourth Hill, Timber Reserve, and other areas of grassy dry forest, often occurring in quite large numbers. The flowers are usually purple, however, occasionally a pure white flower can be found.

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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