

October 2005

## Friends of Warrandyte State Park



# Newsletter

Friends of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) Inc. PO Box 220 Warrandyte 3113  
ABN 9417015665/ACN A0024890C

## A Walk on the Hill

By Mike Coupar

**F**ourth Hill is the place to be in Spring. On a sunny Saturday morning I set off with my camera to photograph the wattles on Fourth Hill.

The massed blooms of the Golden Wattle in particular are highly photogenic when set against a brilliant azure sky. While the deep purple flowers of the Hardenbergia make a stunning contrast to its dark green leaves.

Inside one of the large rabbit exclusion fences dozens of Donkey Orchids were in flower as well as the diminutive Blue Caladenias.



The effect of excluding rabbits for over 10 years is really bearing results for the local plants. In addition, I noticed that several species of rare plants that have been reintroduced were also thriving.

You might remember how, a few years ago, mountain bike riders had turned Fourth Hill into a huge bike circuit, creating new tracks and causing considerable erosion. I was pleased to find that there seems to be less activity. However, the damage to the bush is still very noticeable and it will take many years for it to repair in this fragile environment.

While walking along the broad management tracks I was surprised to see the amount of large trees – Red Box, Long-leaf Box and stringybarks – that had been cut down at ground level. Some of the wood had obviously been removed, but some of the smaller branches and foliage had been left in the bush beside the tracks. I was concerned to see that many of the native grasses and wildflowers were being smothered by the felled trees.

According to Andrew Nixon, Ranger-in-Charge, the clearing of the management tracks was for fire protection to allow access for the new DSE and CFA fire tankers that are larger the old ones.

The track clearing was carried out in autumn by Warrandyte's project firefighters (fire crew). The vegetation removed was mainly eucalypts and wattles. Andrew Nixon said that the tracks should all be OK and not require any further clearing for the next five to ten years.

## Bush Backyard

Contributions this month from *Steven Katsineris* and *Pat Coupar*

### The Endangered and Endearing Eastern Barred Bandicoot.

By Steven Katsineris

When I was growing up in Hobart my parents rented a shack on the southeast coast at Dodges Ferry. I have very fond memories of the place and of the wildlife there. One of the animals I most remember seeing at night in the bush was the diminutive and alluring Eastern Barred Bandicoot.

Many years later I bought a house in Dodges Ferry and found there were Eastern Barred Bandicoots living in and around our yard. If we went out walking in the garden at night we would catch sight of them digging in the ground or if we came home late we would glimpse them hopping about with the car's headlights. During the day we could see the tapered holes they left after foraging. Their nests of grass in thick vegetation on the ground were also visible around the yard.

Although usually nocturnal, I would sometimes observe them in the early morning light and at dusk in the yard and while walking on bush tracks around Dodges Ferry.

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot is small (640grams) and slender (49cm in size, head to tail). It has an elongated head that tapers to a pink nose and whiskered muzzle and large, long, pointed ears. It has fairly soft fur, yellowish-brown in colour, with pale stripes (or bars) across the hindquarters. These stripes from which it gets its name distinguish it from the Brown Bandicoot. The short, thin tail is creamy-white, as are the belly and feet.



Eastern Barred Bandicoots have an acute sense of smell. They use their claws and pointed nose to dig holes in the soil to obtain food. They eat worms, cockchafers and other grubs, beetles and insects. They also feed on native berries, fungi and some introduced fruits.

In Tasmania the young are born between late May and December. In a single breeding season a female can produce 3-4 litters, with 1-4 young in each litter. They have a high reproductive rate, but they also have a very high mortality rate, especially the young. Disease and predators are the main reasons for this. Life span is short, at most three years.

Eastern Barred Bandicoots are now restricted to Tasmania (where they are still common), the Furneaux Group of islands, and a single wild colony of only 200 animals in southwest Victoria. There are captive breeding and reintroduction programs in Victoria, with over 2,000 individuals in a number of protected sites that have been successful in bringing the mainland Eastern Barred Bandicoots back from the brink of extinction.

The destruction of their natural habitat through large-scale forest clearing and predation by dingoes and foxes was responsible for the drastic decline of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot on the mainland. The continuing removal of remnant native bush, including the loss of ground cover required for refuge makes it very difficult for the species to survive. They are wholly protected.

In Tasmania Eastern Barred Bandicoots mainly occurred in the native grasslands and grassy woodlands of the Midlands. These habitats were the first to be extensively cleared for agriculture and grazing when Europeans arrived. Consequently these animals have mostly disappeared from the Midlands region. Due to the absence of foxes and the more selective clearing of bush in the southeast and north of Tasmania, suitable habitats still remain for the bandicoots. These mainly pastoral agricultural areas scattered with patches of native bush are now the stronghold of the species in Tasmania.

Until significant wild populations are re-established on the mainland, Tasmania remains the last refuge of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot. Cars, feral animals and loss of habitat are some of the main threats to their survival. Cats and dogs also cause considerable mortality in some bandicoot populations. As well, cats carry the disease Toxoplasmosis which can often be transmitted to the Bandicoots and is frequently fatal. People can reduce the harmful impact of pets on wildlife by keeping pets indoors at night when Eastern Barred Bandicoots are out in the open feeding.

It is vitally important not to clear areas where Eastern Barred Bandicoots occur and to leave understorey plants that provide shelter, nest sites and food. Even various weeds, including

European gorse and blackberries give refuge from predators and are used as nest sites by bandicoots. Replanting native vegetation also helps the Eastern Barred Bandicoot to regain habitat and assists its prospects of recovery.

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## Running Everywhere

By Pat Coupar

**K** *ennedia prostrata*, more commonly known as Running Postman, is a trailing ground cover with crinkly clover-like leaves and bright scarlet pea flowers.



In the bush they are found creeping over the skeletal soils of the slopes and ridges of Fourth Hill and other dry places. In my garden they are running everywhere. These wonderfully adaptable plants cover the bank of my pond, carpet my wild-

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flower garden and, in a terracotta pot, cascade down the brick wall near my front door.

When they have finished flowering I can collect seeds from the slender woody pods to propagate more of these great plants for next year. Perhaps I will try them in a hanging basket - I've heard they look stunning.

**Question:** How many other indigenous Warrandyte plants have red flowers?

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### More Snippets Please

Spring is a wonderful dynamic time of year. Let us know what is happening in your backyard. 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](mailto:ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au)

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## Letters to the Editor

On behalf of the members of the Wonga Park Environment Group, I would like to express our gratitude to the Friends of Warrandyte State Park, for the continuous support to our environmental activities with the community.

We would like to share through your Newsletter our latest projects in which indigenous plants have been donated by FOWSP.

One activity is planting an indigenous garden at the Wonga Park Primary School. During the first stage, the children had the opportunity to learn about the protection of the environment, while planting the front fence of their school.

The second project consists in working street by street in Wonga Park, delivering an informative/environmental package to the residents, promoting environmental awareness and offering two indigenous plants as a gift. The experience with our first street was very rewarding.

We hope that with all the added efforts, we can effectively walk towards the protection, enhancement and restoration of our wondrous environment.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

**Adriana Simmonds Correspondence Secretary Wonga Park Environment Group**

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# Planting Days

By Pat Coupar

In less than two hours, over 700 hundred trees, shrubs, sedges, grasses and ground covers were planted, guarded and watered. The site was Wombat Gully – a strip of Warrandyte State Park beside Hamilton Road in North Warrandyte.

The morning was a well-organised event with rangers, contractors and volunteers working together to ensure plants, guards, stakes, tools, and water were ready ahead of the scheduled start at 10.00am. Once a severely degraded gully full of pines, prunus, cotoneaster, honeysuckle, ivy and angled onion, this site is now being transformed with a regime of weed control, planting, and clearing and burning dead vegetation.

The Sunday morning planting was the third one at this site this year, two previous plantings were carried out along the gully a couple of months ago by the Friends of Wombat Gully on their regular Wednesday weekly activity mornings.

Following the planting the 'Friends' put on a free barbeque for the workers.

All plants were grown by the North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare and the Friends of Warrandyte State Park. Guards and stakes were supplied by North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare.

Many thanks to rangers David Van Bockel and Colin Bromley for their assistance with this activity and to all those volunteers who gave their time on a Sunday morning to help with the planting.



A even bigger event was the Stane Brae planting. This took place over a weekend in early September and on two consecutive Thursdays. In all, several thousand plants were planted on the river terrace at Stane Brae - a little visited area of Warrandyte State Park between Jumping Creek Reserve and Yarra Brae. In addition to the FOWSP volunteers and Park staff, the second Thursday planting was also attended by around 50 to 60 children from the Warrandyte Primary School,. The day was a great success with between 1,800 and 2,000 plants going in the ground.

Thanks go to Indigenous Design for pre-digging the holes for the plants, teachers Meryl and Carol for organizing the children and Cathy Willis from Manningham Council for doing a stirring job with the barbeque.

Special thanks must go to FOWSP's nursery manager Josh Revell, for not only overseeing the propagation of the plants, but also, at short notice, arranging for the school children to come out and assist with the planting. Josh also coordinated the planting by FOWSP volunteers on both Thursdays.

## Thursday Activity Group (TAG) Weeding Morning

**Date & Time:** Thursday November 3<sup>rd</sup> 10.00am

**Place:** Gold Memorial Road. Park opposite no 24 (Melways ref. 35 D3)

Weed work will include some cut and paint of Honeysuckle, Privet and Pittosporum.

Morning tea will be provided

# 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.



## 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.

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## Thursday Walks 2005

Meet at 1pm at the Nursery, Pound Bend Rangers Depot, Pound Bend Road Warrandyte (Melways Ref. 23 C10) to car pool to walk starting point. Bring a water bottle and snack to eat on the walk if you wish. Wear walking shoes and clothing appropriate to the weather. Walks will last approximately 2 hours

**October 27<sup>th</sup> Fourth Hill. Wildflowers by Josh Revell (to be confirmed)**

**November 24<sup>th</sup> Pound Bend Slashbreak. Butterflies and Moths by Pat Coupar**

## Sunday Walks 2005

Meet at 10.15 am. Bring a water bottle and snack to eat on the walk if you wish. Wear walking shoes and clothing appropriate to the weather. Walks will last approximately 2 hours. Join us after the walk for a BYO lunch (BBQ available) at 'the Folly' at Warrandyte State Park Rangers Depot, Pound Bend. Hot and cold drinks provided.

For more information contact Cynthia Briscoe 9840 9129

**October 2<sup>nd</sup> Professors Hill. Leader David Cameron (to be confirmed)**

**November 6<sup>th</sup> Mt Lofty to Wittons. Leader Graeme Lorimer. Meet at Wittons Reserve carpark, end of Reserve Rd, Wonga Pk (Melways ref. 24 K6)**

## FOWSP Committee 2005

Nursery Manager 0408317327

Park Office 9844 2659

Dick Thomson	9850 9867	Treasurer	<u>Assistant Treasurer</u>	Ray Clarke	9841 8507
Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor			
Peter Curry	9844 0958	Secretary		<u>Wildlife Rescue</u>	
Geoff Speedy	9437 0894			Julie Pryor	9722 1117
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary			
Mike Coupar	9844 1650			<u>Market</u>	
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797	Minutes Secretary		Marie Krause	9712 0498
Artur Muchow	0415383328				
Michelle Hanslow	0402251577			<u>Publications Officer</u>	
Kyen Knight	0418149961			Kirsten Brunt	0438411278

## Manningham City Council Environment Seminars 2005

2<sup>nd</sup> November Scott Watson – “Indigenous Garden Design”

7<sup>th</sup> December Paul Barnard – “Wildfire Behaviour and Community Safety”



Please Note: The seminars are now on WEDNESDAY nights

The seminars are free and no bookings are required.

Supper provided.

Time: 7:30pm

Venue: The

Function Room Grand Hotel

120 Yarra Street, Warrandyte. (Melways Ref. 23 E11)

To join us for dinner at the pub before the seminars, book a seat in the Bistro on 9844 1199.

For further information contact:

Cynthia Danby 9840 9129

## Thursday Activity Group (TAG)

Activities will take place on the first Thursday of the month from 10.00am to 12.00pm. Either meet at the depot or on site. If you are interested in learning some vegetation management skills and helping improve some special sites in the Park just tag along with the Thursday Activity Group (TAG). No previous experience required.

3<sup>rd</sup> November – Gold Memorial Road (Mel ref 35 D3)

1<sup>st</sup> December – Wittons Reserve (Mel ref 24 K6)

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## Deadline for November Newsletter is October 30<sup>th</sup>

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## Native Alternatives to Lawn

By Elspeth Swan

**H**ave you had to think about how much water to put on your garden? Maybe you would like to change to a lawn that requires less mowing and less water. If you have a native garden you may like to consider having a native lawn as well.

In many modern garden designs you will notice a greater use of grasses. More of the grasses used in design work are native. Some like kangaroo grass make a spectacular display in a garden situation when flowering. Native grasses also provide habitats for butterflies and other insects.

Native grasses have a deep root system, which means they require less water than a conventional lawn. Some native grasses remain greener over the summer and if they have taken on a dry tinge, green up quickly after summer showers. As native grasses are adapted to Australia's low fertility soils, they do not require great amounts of fertiliser to keep them going.

When deciding to grow a native lawn you may decide to start with a small area before tackling a larger one. If using trays of plugs allow the grass to grow and fill in the gaps and you may find that as seed sets the grass will gradually take over a larger area.

Native grasses can be grown from seed and some nurseries sell the plants as trays of plugs, which can be planted in a grid pattern into a prepared surface. As with the establishment of

any lawn the more preparation that goes into it the better the results, so follow the directions in any good gardening book. One of the most important aspects is to get rid of the old lawn and any weeds that may have been in it. If the previous lawn was made of a creeping grass then you will need to make sure no pieces of that grass remain.

If growing the lawn from seed you need to make sure the area does not dry out while the seed is germinating. Native grass seed is expensive to buy so you may choose to harvest your own if you have some growing on your property.

Any lawn requires additional watering while it is establishing but in the long term it should require less water than a conventional lawn. Lawn using native grasses also often have less weeds because of the lower fertility levels.

Which native grass to choose? There are several species of grass suitable for lawns and they are found growing naturally in many parts of Australia. Some work is being done by the native grass industry to develop special cultivars suited for use in lawns.

Weeping Grass, *Microlaena stipoides*, Common Wheat Grass, *Elymus scaber*, Wallaby Grass, *Austrodanthonia sp.* and Kangaroo Grass, *Themeda triandra*, make good natural lawns. Find a good nursery that sells indigenous plants and ask their advice on what to plant in your area. Native grasses are suitable for areas that do not have a lot of traffic and are not cut too low.

*This is an edited version of an article published in the Land for Wildlife News Vol 5, No9*

### Worth Repeating

**Scientists infest in the future as tiny bug battles a weed**

By Christian Mooney

Leaf-eating beetles have emerged as the latest biological offensive in the battle against one of Australia's most damaging weeds.

Agriculture Minister Bob Cameron released 100 of the tiny beetles on the Mornington Peninsula yesterday, ahead of other releases across eastern Victoria to control bridal creeper.

Grubs of the beetle strip the shoots of bridal creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*), making it impossible for the plant to fruit and spread.

Bridal creeper, also known as bridal weed, was introduced from South Africa as a garden plant in the 1850s. In the past it was popular for use in bridal bouquets. Today it is declared a weed of national significance by the Natural Heritage Trust.

The creeper's annual shoots form a thick mat of tubers underground, impeding the root growth of

surrounding plants and stopping native vegetation establishing seedlings.

It is hoped that the three millimetre leaf beetle, which is most active during autumn, will supplement the work of a leaf hopper and rust fungus.

"Together, the three agents have the potential to provide year-round control of bridal creeper in Victoria," Mr Cameron said.

Kathryn Batchelor, from CSIRO Entomology, said the beetles would not harm other plants.

"They have a limited capacity for food recognition," she said. Biological measures introduced in Western Australia in 2002 have stemmed the spread of the bridal creeper.

"We reunite the weeds with their natural enemies," Ms Batchelor said. "We introduce them to the habitat and allow them to do the rest."

The Department of Primary Industries will be teaching people how to identify invasive garden plants at the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, which begins today in the Carlton Gardens.

Source: *The Age* 7/4/05

## Be Somewhere Else? Not Me

By Peggy Safstrom



It is 8.30am. Clear. Crisp. Heralding yet another perfect day. A pair of Tree Creepers zig zag their purposeful way around the trunk of a stately River Red Gum, checking out each and every crevice, then up and over to the next tree to start again.

Way up there, a moving, slim white vapour trail hints of a soundless, invisible container of folk heading for somewhere else. But I wouldn't want to be somewhere else! Can they see the Tree

Creeper? Can they see that pair of kangaroos cautiously making their way down the bank over there? Can they watch the tortoise nosing its way under the nardoo leaves down there where the shadow of that huge branch allows me to see him?

Did any of those folk, making their way to the Sydney airport before sunup look up and see a satellite weaving its world-round journey seemingly between the stars of the milky way? I did. As I photographed the river reflecting the pinking clouds of the sunrise, were they catching up on sleep - or working frantically on lap tops readying for that important meeting in Perth? I wonder. Perhaps, in their busy lives, they've never heard of this lazy anabranche of the Murray River named the Lindsay, with its gently sloping banks of dry lignum shrubs where the kangaroos scrape out a patch to rest in, after a long drink. Where I try not to disturb them as I use their well worn tracks to get to the river and fill the billy.

The Lindsay forms an Island here at the Murray/Sunset National Park, the topmost northwest corner of Victoria. A delightful spot to camp for a few days.

[www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au) just a click away. Who'd want to be anywhere else? Not me!

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## VICSEEDS

*In last month's newsletter under 'Worth Repeating' we printed a short article that appeared in The Age (25/8/05) titled 'Victoria to help save world's seeds'. Since then this email from Jeff Jeanes project coordinator of VICSEEDS has been passed on from ranger David Van Bockel for our interest. In it Jeff gives more details of the project ways in which we could help be a part of it.*

By now you are probably aware of the Millennium Seedbank Project hosted by Kew Botanic Gardens in the U.K. and our own little part of this worldwide program, which we have christened VICSEEDS. We operate out of the National Herbarium of Victoria (MEL), which is part of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

In a nutshell, over the next 4 to 5 years we wish to collect at least 4000 seeds from about 500 target species within Victoria. The resulting seeds will be split between our facility and Kew's seedbank at Wakehurst Place, south of London. Our list of species includes all Victorian endemics, whether threatened or secure, threatened species that have their main distribution within Victoria or are of particular interest in this State and several keystone species that are dominant in certain threatened communities. A species list is attached for your

files and in the next couple of weeks we will send you a species list for your particular region. (Editor's note: species list available on request).

An important part of the project, and one which we have probably not stressed strongly enough so far, is our need for two voucher specimens from the location at which the seeds are collected. One of these specimens will be lodged at Kew Herbarium and one at MEL. These specimens can be used at any time to substantiate the identity of the seeds in the event of taxonomic changes. Our collecting protocols are attached (Editor's note: available on request)

Over the next 4 to 5 years, and hopefully beyond, we look forward to working together to achieve our aims and, in so doing, help to secure the future of many of our threatened plant species. We would be very appreciative of any assistance that you can give us in collecting seed on our behalf, or letting us know when seed is ripe and ready to be collected. We are happy to travel to your area and help out in any way we can.

Regards

Jeff Jeanes

(for Jeff Jeanes, Neville Walsh, Helen Rommelaar and Megan Hirst) Project Coordinator 'VICSEEDS' Millennium Seedbank Project National Herbarium of Victoria Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra, Victoria 3141. ph: 03 92522379.

email: [jeff.jeanes@rbg.vic.gov.au](mailto:jeff.jeanes@rbg.vic.gov.au)





By B.G



## Church Council

Late September, Meg Vernon came to the nursery to get hundreds ("if you've got them") of plants for the community church. They will be planted on the river side of the church at council's request.

## Time Trek

Andy Nixon has now been Ranger-in-Charge at Warrandyte State Park for nine years. He originally came for ten weeks.

## Plants and Planting

Damian Coutts and Bronwyn Haines were getting plants for a screen area on their fence and also for planting out a boggy area.

## Extra Employment

Shane Vandeborn, project firefighter (PFF) co-ordinator based at Box Hill DSE visited the depot recently to discuss the employment of PFF's at the Park. The PFF's will be starting around 10<sup>th</sup> October.

## Irene Interview

Irene Fuhrer, one of four regular Thursday helpers has been interviewed. Hopefully the facts will emerge in the next newsletter.

## Farrar's Foray

David (Frankie) Farrar, now a ranger at Kinglake National Park brought a group of students to visit our Park during September. They were from the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE and Frankie is leading them in the Pest Animal Management Module.

They visited Stane Brae and Pound Bend by bus and would like to have visited Mount Lofty. The students also spent a day at Kinglake NP.

Note: Frankie used to be a ranger at Warrandyte State Park and has an interesting contact with Earth Watch. Hopefully more on this topic in the future.

## Holiday Helpers

William Price (Deakin Uni.) was helping as a volunteer at the nursery. He hopes to have a future outdoors, Parks, coastal areas etc.

Also Sarah Krause 9 y.o from Yarrawonga was helping her Nan with pricking out wattles. Claire Babic 6 y.o from Point Cook was helping Ben.

Sebastian Buckingham (biology degree, botany) was also helping. He will be working with the Department of Primary Industry relocating (due to road works) a population of giant worms in Gippsland.

Present at the nursery were Lauren 22 months and Michael 10 y.o, both from Park Orchards, also Benjamin 5 y.o and Reuben 2 y.o all getting plants to plant.

## Photographing Fauna

The new treasurer of FOWSP, Joan Broadberry, was seen photographing a (dead) Tuan.

## Wildlife Rescue

By Julie Pryor

**K**oalas will be coming into their breeding season soon, so be listening for the noise. the season is from late September till February or March. The koala call is a very deep throated continuous grunt. It can be mistaken for a chain saw or a motor bike.

The females should have joeys in their pouches at present and the joeys should start emerging in October or November.

No koalas have come in to care this month and only one has been found, unfortunately it was found dead, along the Yarra River in Warrandyte. It had been attacked by something.

Our koala count this year will be on November the 20<sup>th</sup> so please check your yard for any koalas on this day, and give me a call if you find one.

Julie Pryor 97221117





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### Australian Admiral (*Vanessa itea*)



This attractive medium-sized butterfly has been active in Warrandyte since about mid-september. Its wings are patterned in a deep burnt orange, cream and black. On the underside of the forewings – only seen when the butterfly rests with its wings pressed together – is a blue eyespot that acts as a deterrent to birds.

Look out for this butterfly flying close to the river where it is searching out native stinging nettles which are the foodplant for its caterpillars.

## FOWSP Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

Email.....

Special Interest:.....

Membership     \$20

Concession     \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

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