

November 2005

## Friends of Warrandyte State Park



# Newsletter

Friends of Warrandyte State Park (FOWSP) Inc. PO Box 220 Warrandyte 3113  
ABN 94170156655/ACN A0024890C

## Nurturing Norman's

By Pat Coupar

**N**orman's (or should it be Norman) is one of the lesser known Reserves of Warrandyte State Park. Situated at the end of Bradleys Lane in North Warrandyte, its main claim to fame is that it is at the 'other' end of the Pound Bend Tunnel.

Norman's Reserve has always been a popular swimming spot, but its heavy use contributed to severe erosion of the river bank. In 1990 the site was landscaped with rocks and revegetated to form an attractive beach area.

From the car park a narrow track follows the river in both directions, offering great views of the rocky cliffs on the opposite bank.

The vegetation of Norman's Reserve is interesting and somewhat unusual for Warrandyte. Adjacent to the car park is a low-lying shady area that was once covered in ivy. Thanks to several FOWSP working bees and a Green Corp group the ivy has now gone.

Surprisingly, surviving underneath the ivy were a number of fern species and several other associated plants more commonly found in moist gullies of the ranges.

A few years ago there was a massive germination of Muttonwood (*Rapanaea howittiana*) - another plant of damp sclerophyll forests. These plants are now several metres high and form a dense understory amongst the ferns.

In contrast, on the southern side of the car park is a large swamp - an old backwater of the river. Known as Antechinus Swamp, after a Brown Antechinus that was trapped there some years ago, it too has some interesting vegetation.

The Park has maintained selective weed control, particularly around the car park and

fern area. And Melbourne Water has provided funding for woody weed control - mainly *Pittosporum*, *Prunus* and *Honeysuckle*.

This year Norman's Reserve has been the site of two of our Thursday Activity Group (TAG) working bees. The first involved removing some regrowth *Honeysuckle* between the entrance road and the swamp. The second activity held just a few weeks ago was to plant several hundred tubestock in this same area and across the road in the fern site. The planting included the re-introduction of a number of rare species.

Norman's Reserve is now showing the results of all this attention. With its magnificent Manna Gums lining the river and impressive view of the Tunnel, it is well worth a visit.



## Bush Backyard

Contributions this month from *Elizabeth Seviour*,  
*Ray Clarke* and *Steven Katsineris*

### Bulleen and Beyond

By *Elizabeth Seviour*

I have been rejoicing in the Caper White butterflies around in the district. It's been some years since I saw some, but as I was walking along Pound Road late in September to join a walking group, a white butterfly whipped past my ear and then another and another. No. They were not Cabbage White butterflies. Their smart black-edged wings were very clear. Later I saw more along a walkway in Bulleen, trying out some weedy plants. I have had them in my backyard. They are very welcome after their migration south.



Australian Admirals are also here. A few of us have seen them in our gardens. I saw one on the Lomandras at the Earth Sciences building at Melbourne University and another appeared on my Mustard plants in the back yard.

Ah! The delights of Spring! To hear as well as see. An Oriole calling from Birrarung Park along Templestowe. And last Monday I heard a Fantail Cuckoo at Yarra Flats. How lovely that the wildlife continues amongst all the rush of construction and house extensions.

Platypus as well! I noticed two (I think) dipping and diving as they swam about in the Yarra at Fitzsimons Lane. This was after rain. I hope to see more next Monday

### A New Bird?

By *Ray Clarke*

Walking along the river track at Pound Bend we heard a beautiful, clear, liquid bird call, oft repeated. There he was, perched in a tree near the track. A little greyish bird, throwing his head back and filling the forest with his music. His conformation and sprightly habit of dashing from



tree to tree was reminiscent of the Golden Whistler, but without the colours.

Pizzey and Knight provided the identity. It was an Olive Whistler, whose habitat is the coastal ranges of N.S.W, Victoria and Tasmania.

The bird is a joy. Watch for it.

### The Gorgeous Gang-gang Cockatoo

By *Steven Katsineris*

One of my favourite frequent visitors to our garden, especially in spring and summer, is the beautiful Gang-gang Cockatoo. They come in pairs and small parties to feed on eucalypt and Acacia seeds, insects and fruits, like those of the Plum trees growing in our yard. I have also observed them eating berries from the introduced Hawthorn tree in the bush opposite our house. They usually visit over and over again until the plums and berries are completely finished.

The Gang-gang is a small cockatoo with slate grey body plumage, the male is distinguished by a bright red head. Females often have orange barred chests. Both sexes have a diminutive crest. Their voice sounds like a strong rasping growl.

Gang Gangs breed from October to January. The nest site is on decayed debris (wood shavings, peat moss or dirt) in a hollow in the trunks or large limbs of a eucalypt tree, generally near water. Breeding mostly occurs in tall mature forests that have a dense understorey.



Usually two, occasionally three, white oval eggs are laid. Babies fledge after about 7 weeks, but remain dependent for a further 4-6 weeks. Both parents share incubation and care for the young.

In summer, Gang-gang Cockatoos occupy tall, heavily timbered wet eucalypt forests and adjacent woodlands. In winter, the majority move to lower altitudes, to drier, more open forest, woodlands, suburban parks and gardens. Gang-gangs (particularly the young) also carry out nomadic seasonal movements within this range. In summer they are usually seen in family groups, but many flock together in winter.

Unfortunately the clearance of native vegetation for agriculture has had an effect on the Gang-gang Cockatoo. The berries of Hawthorn and other non-native fruits have to some extent

filled the gap in the Gang-gangs food requirements in winter, but due to their dependence on rather restricted food sources and specific eucalypt habitat, they could soon become a threatened species. They appear to have declined dramatically across their range in NSW over the past 20 years.

While the clearing of native vegetation has aided some bird species, like the Galah, the Gang-gang Cockatoo needs mature eucalypt trees to survive. The more that can be done to protect and preserve stands of eucalypt forest, the more chance for the continued existence of the Gang-gang. The seeds and nest sites provided by large gum trees in our gardens and parks are a valuable contribution to helping the Gang-gang Cockatoo to live. Hopefully we will keep on hearing the distinctive voice of the Gang-gang and seeing these unique, wonderful and beautiful birds in our Yards.

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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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## **Platypus Sighting**

**By Joan Broadberry**

**R**umours of platypus sightings in the Yarra. I kept hearing them. Better check them out. Maybe I'm the last to know.

One Monday afternoon in late September, I went for a walk with my neighbour down to the footbridge across the Yarra River at Finns Reserve Templestowe. The water level was high; the current strong. This couldn't be right? The river was flowing too rapidly. In the past I had observed platypus only in quiet, still pools and lakes. They had shown themselves through a "V" shaped wake. Suddenly Lyn spotted what looked like a small piece of fence paling right out in the middle, keeping pace with the current. Maybe it was just a duck. I got the binoculars on it, and saw the clear, unmistakable flat bill and tail of a



platypus. The little creature dived smoothly and cleanly out of sight. However it soon reappeared and we watched, spell-bound, for over half an hour. With the afternoon light behind us, the view from our high vantage point could not have been better.

We soon spotted a second animal downstream from the bridge, also feeding, diving and revelling in the fast current. It was just magical.

Later when I got home, I rang a number of naturalist friends and happily everyone I told, eventually saw the platypus, and got to share this wonderful sighting. But as so often happens, there was more to the story. My neighbour had suffered some bad news that day. A beloved pet had had to be put down. Our beautiful, unexpected experience with the platypus, her first ever sighting, seemed like a special gift given to help with the heartache.

And it paralleled something that had happened to me ten or more years ago. I once owned an amazing pony. So quiet you could crack a stockwhip off him, but full of bounce when the jumps were put up. He was part of the family. I had him from a three year old until he was at the end of his life. It's a terrible business having a horse put down. It has to be shot on a truck so the body can be removed. One Saturday morning in spring I made the arrangements.

It was done. I drove back past Lower Eltham Park and decided to stop for a walk. A couple of years back from then, I had come under the spell of native orchids. It was an exciting time, gradually finding the whole orchid suite; greenhoods, spiders, sun orchids etc. One I hadn't seen was the diuris commonly called Golden Moths. That awful morning, I found the grassy hillside to the west of the park yellow with Golden Moth orchids. Yet I never saw that orchid there again.

## Market Volunteers

The FOWSP trailer is a very important shop front for a group providing a variety of information brochures and advice to public.

A big thank you to the following people who volunteered their time on the FOWSP trailer at the October Warrandyte market: Ray Kruger, Cath Andrew, Allen Woolcock, Helen Riddell, Lynne Vary, Wolfgang and Marie Krause.

A special thank you to Geoff Speedy for delivering the trailer to the market and also to Marie Krause for the unenviable task of organizing the roster each month. Of course Marie would love to hear from any of our members who would like to take a turn on the trailer. New members especially welcome - no previous experience necessary. Marie's number is: 9712 0498

## FOWSP AGM



The FOWSP Annual General Meeting will be held in November. The date and time is still to be decided by the committee. As soon as this is known it will be advertised at the nursery.

All members are welcome to come along.

For more information contact a member of the committee or ring the Park Office.

## An Unwanted Effect

Bruce Fuhrer, FOWSP member and fungi and moss expert, has reported a rather disturbing finding while on a walk along the river track at Stane Brae.

The area was one of the designated release site of the Bridal Creeper Rust several years ago. The rust has certainly been successful and has spread amongst the Bridal Creeper beyond the release site causing the plants to loose vigor, however, Bruce noticed that the rust was also present on the native Ivy-leaf Violets (*Viola hederacea*) in the vicinity.

Bruce did make it clear that without microscopic examination of the rust, he could not be absolutely certain that it was the same



species of rust as the Bridal Creeper Rust, but it is a concern that it might be and should be followed up.

## Thursday Activity Group (TAG)

**Date & Time:** Thursday December 1<sup>st</sup> Wittons Reserve

Meet at the depot at 10.00am or on site at 10.30am

**Place:** Wittons Reserve at the end of Reserve Rd, Wonga Park (Melways ref. 24 K6)

Work will include removing old rabbit guards from previous plantings.

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

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

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)

December 4<sup>th</sup> Pound Bend Slashbreak Leader Alan Yen. Meet at Pound Bend rangers depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melways ref. 23 C10)

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## 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

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.

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

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## Deadline for December Newsletter is December 4<sup>th</sup>

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## Worth Repeating

### State looked at poison plan to cut trout numbers

Richard Baker State Political Reporter

The State Government has considered using a pesticide that causes Parkinson's disease symptoms in rats to eradicate trout from streams and rivers in Victoria.

Documents reveal that the Department of Sustainability and Environment's plan to boost the population of an endangered native fish, barred galaxias, includes use of the pesticide rotenone to kill trout.

Rotenone has been effective in removing trout overseas, but it could lead to the death of other species because it kills insects that form the basis of the food chain. Norwegian research published last year showed rotenone killed up to 99 per cent of invertebrates in trials.

"The poisoning of sections of streams below barred galaxias populations, where trout are the only populations present, will need to be undertaken," the plan said.

"These measures, not previously practised in Victoria to eradicate exotic species and rehabilitate stream sections for the use of threatened fauna, are necessary because of the urgent need to stabilise the dramatic decline of the barred galaxias."

A department spokesman last night said the Government had no plans to use rotenone to kill trout. It would need the approval of the Environment Protection Authority each time it wanted to use it, he said.

"When any animal is listed as threatened we've got to list an action statement, but not everything on that statement is necessarily used," he said. "We're not planning to do so."

Rivers where it would be most likely used to help boost barred galaxias numbers include the Goulburn, Howqua and Jamieson, as well as the streams feeding Lake Eildon.

Recent international scientific studies have linked rotenone which is derived from the roots of tropical legumes, with symptoms resembling Parkinson's, disease in studies on rats. Symptoms included uncontrollable muscle tremors and loss of balance.

Despite the Government's assurance that it has no plan to use rotenone, the State Opposition, the Murrindindi Shire Council and the Australian Trout Foundation have expressed concerns, and said there were senior people within the department who wanted to use rotenone.

Opposition environment spokesman Phil Honeywood said there needed to be an independent inquiry held before rotenone was used in Victoria.

Source: *The Age* 23/9/05

## Fascinating Facts

Maternal instinct is the motivator for some extraordinarily selfless acts. But maternal sacrifice appears to reach its zenith in the Australian spider *Diaea ergandros*, according to a report by University of Melbourne biologists Theodore Evens, Elycia Wallis and Mark Elgar.

In this species, the female produces only one clutch of young, after which her ovaries shrivel and she becomes incapable of further reproduction. But she labours hard to ensure the survival of her solitary brood. First, she constructs a protective nursery from eucalypt leaves in which the young spend most of their early development. Then she captures insects to feed them.

Her final act of devotion comes as the brood approaches adulthood. Inside her distorted ovaries she has been storing nutrients in the form of unviable eggs. These are too large to pass down her oviducts and be laid, but it is thought that the mother subsequently converts nutrients

from these eggs into haemolymph (blood) in her circulatory system.

The developing spiderlings benefit from this food supply by slowly cannibalising their mother, supping initially on small tastes of haemolymph from her leg joints. She offers no resistance and weakens gradually over several weeks as the young step up their act of matrophagy, finally consuming their mother completely.

By offering herself as food to her babies, the mother spider reduces the possibility of cannibalism among the brood, thereby increasing the potential number of her spiderlings that may reach maturity.

Source: *Nature Australia Spring 1996*

**Editors note:** The spider referred to belongs to a group known as 'flower spiders' which paradoxically are some of the most beautiful of all spiders - commonly found on flowers in gardens although their green and yellow colouring often makes them difficult to see.



## Book Review

*The Weather Makers, the history and future impact of climate change.* By Tim Flannery.\*

Reviewed by Joan Broadberry

This recently released title is the book I have been waiting for. The issue of climate change is just too complex and controversial for many of us to deal with alone. Dr Flannery has taken it upon himself, on our behalf, to do the mammoth job of understanding and collating the research. The result is a thoroughly readable book, setting out clearly the issue of increasing levels of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, causing our planet to become warmer.

The *Weather Makers*, has an amazing sweep. Discussion of such topics as, the earth's atmosphere, history of the earth's climate, causes of the ice ages, CFC's and ozone hole, the nature of and history of fossil fuels, are fascinating and give necessary background. At the book's heart, Tim introduces study after study, example after example giving irrefutable evidence of a rapidly

warming globe and the massive disruption this is causing to the natural world. "It appears that at least one out of every five living things on this planet is committed to extinction by the existing levels of greenhouse gasses". Indeed his thesis is that global warming threatens the future of civilisation itself.

However, paradoxically, *The Weather Makers* is not ultimately pessimistic. The final section is given over to a discussion of possible solutions. What is being done and can be done to turn global warming around. A surprise is the real difference each one of us could make. But the problem is urgent, we had better act quickly. "If we carry on with business as usual, in all likelihood three out of every four species will not be with us at the dawning of the next century."

"It would be hard to imagine a better or more important book." Bill Bryson

\*Dr Tim Flannery scientist, writer and explorer, is director of the South Australian Museum and chairman of both the State Science Council and Sustainability Roundtable. Some other of his well known titles are *The Eternal Frontier*, *The Future Eaters* and *Throwim Way Leg*.

## What are they looking at?



Thursday morning Fowspians were given a treat – a walk amongst the wildflowers along Pound Bend firebreak led by esteemed nursery manager Josh Revell. A highlight of the walk were these mini rabbit exclusion coops where a few years ago a number of Warrandyte's rare and endangered species were planted (and direct seeded). The enrichment planting has been a huge success with Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans*) and Matted Bush-pea (*Pultenaea pedunculata*) thriving on this dry stony site.



## Wildlife Rescue

By Julie Pryor

**K**oalas are being noticed again this month.

Probably because they are becoming more active and with the warmer weather people are in their garden more.

The koala sighted in Merrill Crescent was not a large koala so I think it may be the joey we found in the koala count last year. No signs of a larger one about as yet.

Another kangaroo was hit by a car on Jumping Creek Road this month. Again the person who hit the animal did not stop, but another person found the injured animal and rang for help. Derek Fairley came out and had to put the animal down as both feet were broken.

Please don't forget our koala count is on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November so please check your yard, you may find a surprise visitor.

### **Koala sightings this month:**

Clifford Drive, Wonga Park  
Porter Street, Templestowe  
Merrill Cres., Warranwood

Enquiries: Julie Pryor 97221117



## What to do if you have a koala in your yard

- Please do not attempt to handle a koala, they are not as cuddly as they appear.
- Koalas become stressed easily by dogs. Please put any dogs in the house or garage until the koala has left - usually overnight. Koalas have been known to inflict nasty wounds on dogs.
- Alert your neighbours that a koala is present and ask them to restrain their dogs. **NB** Dog attacks account for 2000 koala deaths per year Australia wide.
- If practical, place a plank of wood securely from a tree to a fence, this can help a koala exit your yard without having to go on the ground.
- If your dog is barking please go and have a look. You may get a pleasant surprise – it might be a koala



## Interview of the Month

### Farm, Fines and FOWSP

By B.G

“Parking fines? I’ve had plenty of them!” Said the farmer’s daughter and ex-student of Portland Higher Elementary School.

Who? Irene Baynes, now Irene Fuhrer was interviewed at the depot nursery whilst removing weeds from tubes containing *Acacia stricta* seedlings.

From school Irene went straight to the Emily Macpherson College where she completed a Domestic Arts Teacher’s Certificate. Her first teaching appointment was at Merbein (“on the Murray”), then on to teach at Portland High School in 1955 until 1961. During this time Irene also went to England as a supply teacher (1958/59). When she returned to Australia Irene met Bruce Fuhrer who ran a camera shop in Portland.

From 1962 to 1964 Irene spent three years at Larrook completing a Diploma of Domestic Arts.

The farm background, being a Brownie leader, enjoying bush trips, involvement with other people and her friend Alwynne led Irene to Warrandyte Friends activities.

When asked about the natural environment Irene said that she “hopes there will be some left for my grandchildren”.

Miscellanea: Irene likes weak tea and no sugar and is said “by a little bird’ to be a very clever needle woman.

Footnote by BG: Every Thursday people like Irene are quietly and consistently helping at the Warrandyte depot nursery. Come along yourself and meet interesting people and plants.



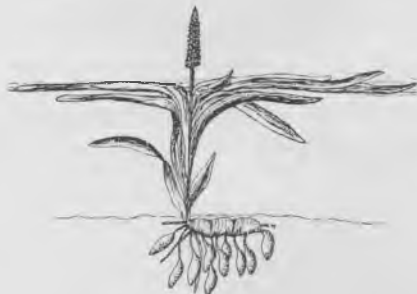
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**Water Ribbons**  
(*Triglochin* sp.)

Water Ribbons are found in fast-flowing rivers like the Yarra, still water swamps, and in damp mud. The strap-like leaves may be broad or narrow, floating or erect. Small greenish flowers occur on a large spike held above the leaves. The plant has a robust rhizomatous tuberous root system. The starchy tubers were an important food source for Aboriginals.

**FOWSP Membership Form**

Name .....

39 08/11/05

Address .....

.....

Tel. no. ....

Email.....

Special Interest:.....

Membership     \$20

Concession     \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113