

June 2007

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# Friends of Warrandyte State Park



## Newsletter

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

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### FOWSP Receives Award

By Pat Coupar

**M**id-afternoon on Friday May 18<sup>th</sup> and we were driving south-east, out and up to the Dandenong Ranges National Park.

Windscreen wipers were going full belt. It had been raining on and off all day – something of a rarity in these drought troubled times. The ranges loomed dark and grey in the distance, but the mountain itself was shrouded in thick white cloud.

As we ascended the visibility diminished until, even with headlights blazing through the swirling mist, we could only see a few metres of the road ahead. Fortunately we were following another car which, we assumed, was heading for the same destination as us - the Skyhigh restaurant and Observation deck on the top of the Mount Dandenong. No views today!

Through the car window, we waved our invitation to the man at the entrance gate and found a place to park. Not only was it wet and foggy, but it was wintery cold and we couldn't wait to get inside.

We were welcomed at the door by a familiar face - our own Ranger-in-Charge, Andy Nixon. Inside the semi-circular room it was bright and warm with a buzz of people including many Fowspians.

We were all attending a special event organised by Parks Victoria to celebrate Volunteers Week and to thank volunteers from various Parks over Metropolitan Melbourne for their services. And in particular to recognise 25

years of long service by two groups: the Australian Rhododendron Society and the Friends of Warrandyte State Park.

Firstly, we were officially welcomed onto Wurundjeri land by a tribal descendant who was also a ranger. Short speeches followed to thank all the volunteers, and then came the announcement that both the Australian Rhododendron Society and FOWSP were to receive a long service award in the form of a grant of \$5,000 each to be spent on a project of our own choosing.



In addition, both groups were presented with a magnificent framed photograph. In our case it was a montage of three photos: a group photo in the centre, flanked by a river scene and a photo of two Nodding Greenhood orchids – our logo flower.

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### FOWSP Receives Award continued

Short speeches of acceptance were given and photos taken before a delicious selection of cakes and fruit was served for afternoon tea.

We are grateful to Parks Victoria for acknowledging the volunteer work of FOWSP over our 25 year history. We would like to think we have made a difference and hope that some of our younger members will become Park Rangers as they perform such essential work for the environment. FOWSP looks forward to a continuing partnership with Parks Victoria and in particular our local Warrandyte State Park rangers.



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## News from the Committee

### Rangers Report:

- The Rabbit program has been particularly successful due to the fires. Post program counts are underway to confirm the success.
- It has been a very active and successful prescribed burn season this autumn. Many of the rangers have attended the burns which has impacted normal operations.
- Warrandyte/Kinglake Nature Reserves are being managed. The one-off budget allocation has been spent.
- Hills Burch Cottage – one of the oldest buildings in Nillumbik had a big clean-up with Conservation Volunteers Australia. This may be a good place to visit for a TAG event.
- Work is underway to drought proof Pound Bend ranger's station and the nursery.
- Andy Nixon is leaving his current position for 15 months to take another position with PV. Conrad will fill in until a replacement is found.

### Nursery Report:

- Volunteer planting on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May at Pound Bend – to replace the treated pine with plant barriers. There will be a BBQ afterwards.
- TAG activity with ranger Dave Van Bockel and 5 volunteers cutting and painting weeds in Timber Reserve.
- There has been a request from the Warrandyte Community bus to gauge the possible use by FOWSP. The bus is available for hire (including weekends). This could be useful for TAG activities.
- Contractors are working on Cape Ivy and English Ivy reduction along the river.
- When it rains nursery sales increase – there were 29 sales on Sunday.



## 25 Year Anniversary

The FOWSP committee is planning a celebration for our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We would like members to search through their cupboards and drawers for any interesting archival material. Or if members have any anecdotal stories to pass on these would be most welcome.

Articles can be sent to the editor at [ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu](mailto:ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu).

## Bush Backyard

### Inviting Rainbow Lorikeets to Your Garden.

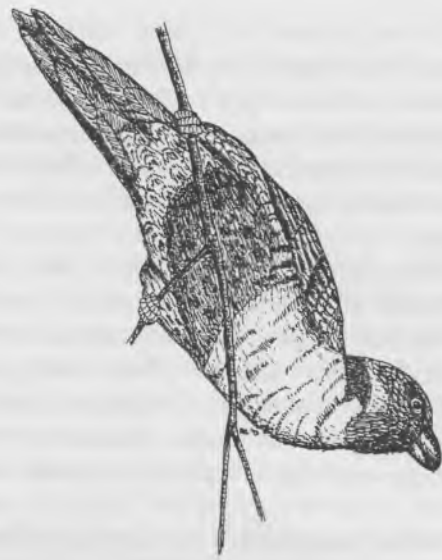
By Steven Katsineris

**R**ainbow Lorikeets are stunningly beautiful, brightly coloured, active and gregarious parrots. They have become a common sight in a lot of gardens and parks in many suburban areas over recent years due to the replanting of suitable native vegetation. More Rainbow Lorikeets have been attracted to urban areas because most of their food, like nectar, pollen and blossoms comes from the kinds of flowering native trees and shrubs that have been replanted. They also feed on fruits, berries, insects and some seeds.

Rainbow Lorikeets inhabit Eucalypt forest, rainforest, woodlands, coastal heaths, scrubland, parks and gardens. Sadly, the clearing of a large areas of Australia's native bush for farming, forestry, housing and other developments has meant that countless trees that Rainbow Lorikeets require for nest hollows and for food sources have been lost. And whilst much is being done to replant and restore the land it will take time to replace these forests.

In the meantime, in our suburban gardens, parks and rural regions we can really make a significant difference to Rainbow Lorikeets and other native birds. We can easily make our gardens and neighborhoods an inviting and friendly place for Rainbow Lorikeets to visit. The best thing we can do in our gardens and local district is to grow native vegetation, especially trees and shrubs like Eucalyptus, Banksia, Melaleuca, Grevillea, Myrtaceae, Callistemon and Proteacea that provide food. Their favourite food is the nectar and pollen of native flowers. Nectar gives them energy and the pollen provides protein for healthy feathers.

Also retaining native trees in your yard and district, as old trees with hollows are necessary for Rainbow Lorikeets to make their nests in. And planting more native trees will eventually provide habitat for Rainbow Lorikeets, various other native birds and wildlife. Nest boxes are another cheap and easy way to provide a safe home for Rainbow Lorikeets. Having a birdbath in your yard is useful too, because Rainbow Lorikeets will drink from them and will often have a bath, especially after feeding.



Please avoid giving Rainbow Lorikeets processed or other kinds of foods as they may become dependent on these food sources and less likely to forage in the in their natural habitat. Feeding Rainbow Lorikeets other types of foods, such as biscuits, bread, seed or grain is not good for them. The digestive system of Rainbow Lorikeets can't cope with too much artificially refined sugar, such as those found in processed foods like biscuits and bread. Also eating certain seeds can in fact cause damage to their tongue and beak. So it's important to let them feed on native plants and other wild foods.

And you will have the pleasure of observing and listening to Rainbow Lorikeets as they climb and fly around in the trees and bushes in your yard. Watching Rainbow Lorikeets and other native birds up close, as they come and go, screeching in flight and chattering, feeding and nesting in your garden are the sorts of experiences that ought to give the family great enjoyment and lots of delightful memories.

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### Unwanted Visitors from my Backyard

By Pat Coupar

**R**ecently my house has been invaded by some unwelcome visitors from my backyard. They are smooth, shiny, and black with lots and lots of legs. Millipedes.

The millipedes appear on the floor, walls, in the shower and on window sills. When disturbed they curl up and will sometimes release a pungent yellow secretion.

Not only are they unwanted in my house, they are unwanted in Australia. For these millipedes are invaders from Europe – Portugal to be exact,

hence their name Black Portuguese Millipede (*Ommatoiulus moreleti*). They were accidentally introduced into the country, first appearing at Port Lincoln in South Australia in 1953. They have now spread across all southern and mainland States.

Portuguese millipedes hatch from eggs laid in the soil. Initially they have only 3 pairs of legs, but as they moult more body segments with legs attached are added. The millipedes are herbivorous scavengers feeding at night on plant material. When in plague proportion they may damage seedlings of fruit and vegetable crops



### What's happening in your backyard this month?

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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## Tip of the Month



Angled Onion

Remove your invasive introduced Angled Onion (*Allium triquetrum*) by hand digging bulbs prior to flowering and replace with a selection of the following native lilies: Chocolate Lily (*Arthropodium strictum*), Vanilla Lily (*Arthropodium milleflorum*), Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*), Leek Lily (*Bulbine semibarbata*) or Flax Lilies (*Dianella* spp.)



Flax Lily

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## Expressions of Interest

### Newsletter Editor Wanted

After 11 years our editor is unplugging her keyboard. From the beginning of next year she is moving on to other things. So the committee is asking for expressions of interest for a new editor. The job is not necessarily as hard as you might think and a new person would have free reign to put out a newsletter in their own style. It would be preferable if the new editor were to become a committee member (meetings are held monthly in the rangers office).

If you are interested and would like to know more please contact a member of the committee.

### Grants Co-ordinator

The committee is also looking for a person to co-ordinate the many grants that are available to FOWSP. We are informed of some grants by mail and by Parks Victoria directly, but many others fall through the net. Generally the application forms for the grants are straightforward. The person we are seeking would need to attend some committee meetings to liaise with committee members from time to time.

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## Kicking a Park When it's Down

Recent Prescribed burns in the Grampians National Park

By Mike Coupar

Smoke was noticed in the centre of the Grampians National Park early on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2006. An hour later a reconnaissance plane located the fire at Mount Lubra on the Serra Range. The extreme fire weather conditions, which included two days of total fire ban, allowed the fire to escape and spread rapidly. Halls Gap in the Park was threatened and surrounding forest and farmlands were blackened. The township of Pomonal was surrounded in flames and other small communities were also under attack for days on end. Tragically, a father and son lost their lives in the flames.

The fire was finally declared 'under control' on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February due to rain and the valiant efforts of countless fire fighters. It had been so extensive that half of the Park was burnt and, at times, it was so intense that rocks were heard exploding. In the aftermath it was discovered that all the vegetation types had been burnt to some extent, including heathland, River Red Gum swamps, mountain slopes and plateaus.

Recently, we visited the Park for the first time since the bushfire to see the state and extent of the fire-affected areas. Our general impression was that the vegetation is recovering, but only slowly, probably as a result of the protracted drought. So, more than a year since the fire, epicormic shoots now cover the trunks and branches of surviving eucalypts, shoots have appeared at the bases of shrubs, such as melaleucas and seedlings, grasses and sedges are starting to cover the bare ground.

Overall, the country is open compared to the areas that escaped the fire. Also, rocky landmarks such as Paddy's Castle are now conspicuous compared to previously when they were hidden by the foliage of trees and undergrowth. The degrees to which the forests types were affected depended on the intensity of the fire and the species of trees. It is now apparent where the fire killed groups of trees outright - particularly in the swamps. In other parts the fire moved through the undergrowth sparing the forest canopy.

We saw only a few animals when driving and walking through the fire-affected parts of the Park. A couple of Wedge Tail eagles overhead, a Flame Robin, some Western Grey Kangaroos, the occasional Black Wallaby and some ants scurrying over the ground, were some that come to mind.

This relative sparsity of animals was expected, because it is common knowledge that most species suffer reductions in their populations after bushfires. Sometimes local extinctions have occurred after extensive fires or when fires have occurred too frequently. For these reasons we were alarmed to see plumes of smoke rising again in the Park. The reason for the smoke was obvious. A large assemblage of fire crew with around a dozen vehicles were systematically carrying out prescribed burns in the unburned half of the Park adjacent to farm land and Halls Gap. According to DSE's recent information, 55.6 square kilometres has been treated.

The next day we also witnessed a large area where there had been a recent and intense fuel reduction fire. It had been so ferocious that only the trunks of grass trees remained on the bare ground together with eucalypts that had burnt to their crowns (photo).



No one would argue against reducing the risk to lives and assets, but to carry out such extensive burning-off so soon after a major bushfire is an overreaction. What seems to have been overlooked is that the Park contains natural assets of State and National significance. Fifty of the Park's animal species are threatened in Victoria. The plight of 18 of them is so severe that Action Statements have been devised for their protection under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act.

Although much of the flora is adapted to fire, very few of the animals are able to survive the immediate effects of a bushfire unless they can find suitable habitat ahead of the fire front or shelter in hollows while the fire passes. Birds and flying insects have an obvious advantage of being able to escape. The animals that cannot are either burnt to death or suffocate. The Grampians koalas are a prime example of this most fire-sensitive group. Life is not secure even for the survivors left after the fire has passed, because many become victims to birds of prey and foxes or they may starve to death.

Continued on next page



### Kicking a Park When it's Down continued.

There is even danger for those animals fortunate enough to escape to intact patches of bush, because they may be attacked and driven off by territorial resident populations eager to protect their limited resources of food and shelter.

The present environmental situation in the Grampians is a concern, because very little is known about the fate of animals after bushfires or control burns. Although small ground mammals have been studied to some extent, less is known about how arboreal mammals, large ground dwelling mammals and invertebrates deal with fire.

Unfortunately, virtually nothing is known about the abilities of bats, reptiles, amphibia and countless invertebrates to survive. If any species are vulnerable in these groups, then repopulation may not occur because the Grampians is virtually an island sanctuary surrounded by cleared agricultural land disconnected to any functional wildlife corridors. So, is it possible that the threatened Woodland Blind Snake, Swamp Skink or Growling Grass Frog is now locally extinct? Some of the other FFG-listed threatened animals in the Grampians are the Large Ant Blue, Amethyst Hairstreak, Silver Skipper and Large Brown Azure butterflies, the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby and the Heath Mouse.

We can only hope that these vulnerable and endangered species are surviving in some part of the Park that is safe from prescribed burning. The only way to find out is by appropriately funded research.

Research will also better inform land managers as to how much fire our National Parks can tolerate.

### Reference material

Beyond the Smoke: Fires, destruction and images of hope – Grampians Region 2006, FOGGS, 2007

Current Prescribed Burns and Burns this season, 2007, Department of Sustainability and Environment. <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>

Ecological effects of Fuel Reduction Burning in a Dry Sclerophyll Forest. Tolhurst KG et al, Department of Conservation and Environment, Melbourne 1992.

Grampians National Park Management Plan, 2003, Parks Victoria

The Effects of Fire on Victorian Bushland Environments. Department of Sustainability and Environment. <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au>



## People in Plants

By Shelagh Morton

### Correa reflexa Native Fuchsia

The great French botanist Labillardiere sheltered under correa's "bushy thickness" at South Cape Tasmania in 1792. He named it *Mazentoxeron rufum*, but this name did not survive as the genus was established by Henry Andrews, who named it after Jose Correia da Serra (1750-1823).

Correia da Serra was a Portuguese statesman, scholar and botanist and one of the many European men of letters who contributed to the growing bank of information on the classification of the plant world. He was a typical representative of the Enlightenment, working in France with Jussieu and in London with Sir Joseph Banks even



though he did not agree with Linneus on some points.

He served as Portuguese ambassador in Washington and became a friend of Thomas Jefferson.

Correa plants were cultivated in the scientific garden at Empress Josephine's estate Malmaison by her gardener Pierre Ventenat. I tried hard to find some when I visited Malmaison last year

but was not successful.

Our Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*) with its pale green bells is a welcome addition to any garden.

## Parks Issues

By Pat Coupar

**N**ot Warrandyte State Park this time. In fact not even an Australian Park, but this is an issue that should concern us all.

One of the main reasons we belong to conservation organisations like FOWSP is because we care about the natural environment and its flora and fauna. For most of us this concern does not stop locally. Recently, through the newsletter of the International Humane Society, I read about a terrible practice that is going on in South Africa and other areas of the world.

It is called Canned Hunting. This expanding multi-million dollar industry is designed to give customers the opportunity to kill exotic or native animals for trophies. These are privately run operations in which the animals are pre-captured and released into enclosures to provide a guaranteed easy kill for the hunters.

Clients spend thousands to participate in 'canned hunts'. Top dollars are paid for the most popular trophies – notably lions, rhino, leopards, buffalo and elephants. Animals are supplied to these so called ranches by private breeders, animal dealers and, believe it not, zoos that have surplus animals. This is a cruel exploitation of wildlife. Some animals reared for this purpose are so used to being handled by humans, they will actually approach the hunters willingly.

While hunting is banned in National Parks in South Africa, a case was reported just recently in which six lions had been lured to a bait, drugged and abducted from the Kruger National Park for use in ranches.

Often deliberately hidden under the guise of eco-tourism Canned Hunting is not limited to South Africa, but is big business in the USA where it is allowed in most States where it is estimated more than 1000 ranches operate.

Following an international campaign to ban Canned Hunting, the South African Government commissioned a report on public opinion into the practice, with 60% of respondents agreeing that Canned Hunting should be banned. Despite these findings, instead of banning the practice, the Government issued new legislation in February 2007 regulating the industry. Under the new legislation, it is still permitted to hunt captive bred animals released into a 'reasonable area' for 24 months. In addition, 'damage-causing animals', if perceived to be a threat to life, are permitted to be shot. Without question these regulations are open to abuse by Canned Hunting operators.

More information on Canned Hunting can be found on the following websites:

[www.hsi.org.au](http://www.hsi.org.au)

[www.endcannedhunting.org/](http://www.endcannedhunting.org/)



## Market Volunteers

A big thank you to the following people who volunteered their time on the FOWSP trailer at the May Warrandyte market: Ray Kruger, John Hanson, Cath Andrew, Mark and Margaret Hassell, Wolfgang and Marie Krause.

The trailer was delivered by Peter Curry and returned by Wolfgang Krause.

Anyone who would like to be rostered on to help with the trailer, even for just one hour, can contact Marie Krause on 9712 0498. New members especially welcome - no previous experience necessary.





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**Cranberry Heath**

*(Astroloma humifusum)*

This member of the heath family (Epacridacea) is an attractive ground-hugging plant with spiky bluish-green leaves. It has bright red tubular flowers in late autumn and early winter. These are followed by green globular berries that are edible.

Cranberry Heath can be seen growing on dry banks, particularly along the walking track between Black Flat and Jumping Creek.

**PLEASE CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL TO SEE IF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION IS DUE**

**FOWSP Membership Renewal Form**

Name .....

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.....

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Concession     \$10

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