

October 2004

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

FOWSP Grant Success

By Mike Coupar

Our group has been successful in its application for a grant from the Federal Government Department of Family and Community Services under its 'Volunteer Small Equipment Grants 2004 (Round 2)'.

Kevin Andrews (Federal Minister for Menzies) informed us of the good news some months ago.

The cheque we have recently received is for \$4,382.73, this is the full amount we applied for minus GST on the items to be purchased. As our organisation is not registered for GST, the committee has agreed to cover the additional costs out of our own budget.

The equipment we will be purchasing with the grant money includes a Compaq computer for the production of our newsletter and a Nikon digital camera to record activities, flora, fauna etc.

The camera is a SLR-like digital with a large focusing range so it will be ideal for photographing anything from Fowspians going about their work to a rare orchid at close range.

Arrangements for borrowing the camera, which will be kept in a locked cupboard at the Ranger's office, will be advertised in the next newsletter, once the camera has been purchased.

Our newsletter editor is delighted with the news of this grant as she has been struggling for the last eight years with an old, frequently crashing machine and when she has cut and pasted articles she has often used real scissors and real glue.

So once the equipment has been purchased you can expect our editor to further improve the layout of the newsletter and include a range of better quality photographs.

All Members are invited to attend

The FOWSP Annual General Meeting (AGM)

to be held on

Sunday November 28th at 4.00pm

The meeting will be followed by a social BBQ Please bring a plate
BYO meat and drinks

Orchids of the Greater Melbourne Area

By Michelle Hanslow

I am a relative newcomer to the wonderful world of orchids, having only recently acquired a (non-native) *Cymbidium* orchid and a couple of delicate pink *Dendrobium* orchids. Nevertheless, the greenhoods currently flowering in the nursery inspired me to go in search of some of the diverse species that can be found in the Melbourne area.

I travelled out to the Baluk Willam Reserve in Belgrave South. This small, but intact, indigenous flora reserve is hidden away behind Birdland Reserve. I was quite excited by the prospect of seeing rare and threatened orchids that I had heard could be found - all in just one small reserve. Unfortunately I found only two species of orchid.

This reserve, although a fair distance from Warrandyte, is really worth a look. It is split down the middle by Courtneys Road, with the flora and fauna reserve on the west side of the road and Baluk Willam reserve on the east side. The vegetation is magnificent. When I visited, the Dusty Miller (*Spyridium parvifolium*) and many low-growing wattles were in full bloom providing and interesting vista of greyish-white and yellow everywhere I looked.

The bushland was virtually weed-free, which was glorious, and it was a perfect warm day with just a light breeze. The bird life was incredible, and I saw and heard species that I have never come across before. Perhaps they were not used to human presence - the park had that feel to it. A world of its own.

I was encouraged to visit this park after attending a recent Manningham Environmental Seminar given by Jeff Jeanes, author, photographer, naturalist and orchid specialist. The topic of native orchids in the greater Melbourne area was very popular.

Jeff is currently working at the National Herbarium, as an Ecologist/Evolutionary Biologist, collating orchid information for a database containing details on all major plant groups, fungi and algae. He described the 5 main forms of orchids that can be found across Australia - Terrestrial forms (evergreen, solitary and colony-forming) of which there are more than 300 species in Victoria, and Epiphytic forms (monopodial, with all leaves arising from the base; and sympodial, branching varieties) of which there are only 5 species in Victoria.

Some orchids are self-pollinating, however most are pollinated by insects (bees, wasps and

fungus gnats). There is usually a 1:1 relationship between the orchid and the pollinating insect species, so if the insect dies (due to insecticide sprays etc.) then the survival of the orchid is also threatened. The orchids thus pollinated often mimic the appearance of the female insect in appearance and/or pheromones. Most members of the Spider-Orchid (*Caladenia*) group are pollinated through this means (also called pseudocopulation). Their large flowers have long tapering sepals and petals ending in clubs or covered with dark glandular hairs, and it is these that are the source of the sexual attractants for the male thynnid wasps (the pollinators). They are attracted to the orchid's scent, which mimicks the female thynnid wasp pheromone. The identities of the pollinator/s for most orchid species are still not known.

Other factors that are important to the survival of orchids are mycorrhizal fungi associations and fire. If mycorrhizal fungi are present in the soil, they assimilate nutrients for the orchid, thus increasing the germination rate of the seeds. Some species of orchid are dependent on fire for flowering, or the flowering rate is increased with the presence of fire while others are adversely affected by fire

The genus *Cryptostylis* is a small genus made up of about 20 species. All five Australian species are pollinated by male Ichneumon Wasps who



Small tongue orchid
Cryptostylis leptochila

mistake the flower for a female and attempt to mate with it. Fire plays an important role in Australian ecosystems in maintaining plant diversity. It removes vegetative litter and surrounding ground flora, which increases light and temperature at the surface, and may also increase

moisture levels available to the orchids, as a result of reduced competition by other plants. Fire also changes the soil, with an increase in nutrients often resulting.

Timing of fire is crucial, and the best time for orchids is during late summer or early autumn, after seed dispersal but prior to new shoot growth. (*Caladenia* species can flower profusely following a hot summer fire (e.g. *C. australis*)). Controlled burns outside of this period, such as during spring and autumn, can threaten many orchid species. Rainfall and temperature can also

Cont'd on next page:

Orchids of the Greater Melbourne Area cont'd

influence flowering, with flowering often aborted when periods of sustained hot, dry weather follow flower opening.

Jeff has designed a set of Conservation Status Categories to determine how to manage the orchid species of Greater Melbourne, many of which are becoming localised and even extinct. Preservation of orchid species can be done conserving and managing their habitat and by protecting individual plants and colonies. This includes the use of cages to protect the orchids from attack by animals, such as White-winged Choughs, which dig up the tubers. This has been done at One Tree

Hill to save the *Caladenia rosella* (Rosella Spider-Orchid).

Jeff showed a huge number of amazing orchid photos, most of which he had taken, and many of these were species found in the Warrandyte area.

Of interest to me are the many rare species that are still found at the Baluk Willam Flora Reserve. For those of you unfamiliar with this reserve, it is in the south-west portion of the Dandenong Ranges at Belgrave South, 33km south-east of Melbourne (Melway ref: 84 E7). I highly recommend a visit within the next month or so, as I am sure that the orchids will be out in good numbers soon enough.

Indigenous Phoenix

By Ben Gotlib

At 11.00am, Sunday 19th September, a group of volunteers met at the Anderson Creek Streamside Reserve, adjacent to Harris Gully Road, Warrandyte. The area is actually unreserved Crown Land managed by Box Hill C.S.E.

Last Spring part of the north-east corner was



burnt and last winter the west side opposite was subjected to quite a hot burn.

We met to look at the different bush regeneration that was taking place in each of the two areas.

Present were: Ian, Julie, Ken, Ben, Debbie and 11 year old daughter Miranda and Margaret with 5 year old grand-daughter Claire. Under the guidance of Ranger David Van Bockel, the group worked in an area where bamboo stakes had been placed in the ground a month earlier to mark the germination of indigenous plants.

Regenerating species ranged from eucalypts to maidenhair ferns and from Acacias to Dianellas. Rampant grassy weeds around each tiny plant were either pulled or cut to ensure the emerging plant could obtain light for better growth.

We found weedy hemlock and Miranda found some bull ants. We also found Con Cosmos across the creek at the CFA depot – Con was in charge of the original burn regime.



At about 12.30pm Ranger Colin Bromley arrived with the welcome barbeque lunch and hot drinks. Colin went around the area and in a few minutes had collected enough rubbish to fill a large green garbage bag. The rubbish was left, not by the plants and animals, but by humans – much of it probably washed down the creek after rain.

A good effort by all, and from the ashes we'll help the rebirth of the bush.

Geoff's Hotel

By Rohan Smith

This is a short note to thank Geoff Speedy for supplying the pre-cut wooden parts to build four Phascogale nesting boxes for our property.

Unfortunately for the Phascogales, these boxes have proved popular with Sugar Gliders as attested by the photo. Shown here is presumably one male, two females and I estimate around 8 youngsters (two just visible at the bottom of the photo). The adults have thrown themselves across their offspring in response to the lid being opened.

This is the third round of young for this particular box. It is mounted only five feet from the ground which makes it possible to take a weekly peek without dismounting from the tree, using a ladder or generally disturbing the occupants.

I've recently learnt, via Manningham's excellent property management course, that Phascogale boxes should be mounted on Red Stringybark trees, as this bark is the nesting material of choice for said critters. Once the current occupants have vacated I'm going to move the boxes to more suitable trees.

Thanks again Geoff.



You are invited to attend a special Parks Victoria / FOWSP event

Friday 22nd October 2004, 7pm onwards BYO BBQ

Guest Speaker, Libby Jude

(Acting Ranger In Charge, Maribyrnong Valley Parklands.)

Parks Victoria's Fire Rehabilitation Program in the Alpine District

- What did the 2003 fires destroy?
- What have Parks Victoria done to address the damage to assets, the environment and tourism in the area? built
- Where did Warrandyte State Park's funding dollars go?

These questions and more will be answered in a friendly, informal setting, with the Friends of Warrandyte State Park.

Libby Jude has been based in Foster and Bright over the last 12 months, managing aspects of Parks Victoria's Fire Rehabilitation Program. She is fully aware of all the issues (positive and otherwise) that have arisen from this program and is keen to share her knowledge and practical experiences with us.

Libby previously worked at the Yarra Valley Parklands (Westerfolds Park) As Team Leader (Environment Program), and knows Warrandyte State Park well.

Location: The Folly, WSP Ranger's Depot at the end of Pound Bend Road (Melway 23 C10)

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 4.00pm.



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.

Thursday Afternoon Walks

On the fourth Thursday of every month there will be a short walk (about one hours duration) somewhere in the Park. If you would like to attend either bring your lunch and stay on after the propagation morning or meet at the nursery at 1.00pm.

Walks will take place on: October 28th
 November 25th

Deadline for November Newsletter is October 31st



FOWSP Committee 2004

Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor	<u>Wildlife Rescue</u>	
Dick Thomson	9850 9867	Treasurer	Julie Pryor	9722 1117
Peter Curry	9844 0958	Secretary	<u>Market</u>	
Geoff Speedy	9437 0894		Marie Krause	9712 0498
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary	<u>Assistant Treasurer</u>	
Mike Coupar	9844 1650		Ray Clarke	9841 8507
Sharon Mason	9844 4370			
Melanie Birtchnell				
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797		<u>Nursery Manager</u>	0408800026
Michelle Hanslow	0402251577		<u>Park Office</u>	9844 2659



Manningham City Council Environment Seminars 2004

4th November - Hamish Allan "Currawong" - Past, Present and Future"

Discover the history, rich diversity of flora and fauna and challenges of managing Currawong Bush Park, gateway to the Green Wedge. Hamish will discuss current management strategies and future plans for one of the region's most significant conservation reserves.

Hamish Allan was Ranger at Currawong Bush Park for seven years and is now Conservation Planner at Manningham City Council.

2nd December - David Van Bockel and Anthony Owen – "Fire Ecology"

David and Anthony will talk about fire as a conservation management tool and illustrate its role in bushland ecology through a series of local case studies.

David Van Bockel, Ranger at Warrandyte State Park, has over 10 years experience in fire ecology, controlled burning and wildfire fighting. Anthony Owen is an environmental consultant who uses fire as a management tool.

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:

Cathy Willis on phone: 9840 9122 or cathy.willis@manningham.vic.gov.au

Next Committee Meeting

Wednesday 11th November the Folly, WSP ranger's depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte.

Bush Backyard

*Contributions this month from Steven Katsineris
and Geoff Speedy*

Sanctuary

By Steven Katsineris

The other day while putting away washing in my daughter's room I stood watching two Turtle Doves through the window, a pair who have shared our garden and lives since we have lived here. They seem to live almost entirely in our yard, especially in and around the fairy garden, walking, eating seeds and drinking water from the containers there. They roost and nest in the trees there too, this year they had two young ones, who learnt to fly in the yard and then, left. They are a source of joy to watch, but I also feel comforted and calmed by their presence.

It got me thinking that although we crave and need to see and do new things in our lives we also want and require things that anchor us in life, routines, the rhythm of familiar things that give us feelings of relief, security and comfort. This is important in everyday life, but especially in times of turmoil in our personal lives and in the world. And we cling to these things most when things are really difficult, to help to get us through. I guess that's the real meaning of what our gardens and yards mean to us and what home is, a place of familiar surroundings, a refuge, a safe haven, not just for the wildlife, but for us humans too.

Spring and small birds

By Geoff Speedy

I love the nesting season, when the small birds are constantly calling and are very active. As I write, the shrike-thrushes are calling loudly in a variety of crystal-clear whistles, there's a butcher bird, also a loud cheep-cheep I haven't identified, and occasional tree-creepers with a multiple, fast, high-pitched call.

There is a very high whistling call that is probably a grey fantail, as well as the peep-peep-peep of a pardalote.

The small birds are in constant motion at about 10.00 am, feeding amongst the dominant red box trees. I also see thornbills, yellow and red robins and eastern spinebills. The larger birds such as the currawong and wattle birds have the 'floor' earlier in the day.

This year the tree-creepers are having a good one, there are 2 or 3 pairs in the immediate vicinity of the house. But the leaden and satin and rufous flycatchers are missing, perhaps conditions are better elsewhere or they will come later.

I remember a delightful day some years ago, when in a strong wind, the newly fledged satin flycatcher babies were cached in a tree just above head height, and I watched them being fed for hours. Four of them were lined up and fluffed up against the wind, and conducted a constant battle for position, with the wind, and with each other, whilst the adult birds worked hard all day keeping up the food supply.

To encourage small birds, you can plant a variety of bushes and small trees. For instance, I have Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*) flowering close to house - masses of purple flowers, and very popular with the thornbills and pardalotes. Come the summer fire season, I will prune them back to a bunch of sticks.

I use the same approach with the smaller red box trees. Rather than remove the whole tree, I prune them back to a stump, allow the regrowth every year to sustain the birds through spring, then remove the regrowth about Xmas time. Low fire risk, but more entertainment in spring.

Blue wrens live closer to the road, in denser wattles and cassinia that I prefer not to have right near the house for fire risk reasons. For the really small birds, the Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*) is amazingly spiny, which protects the wrens from attack by larger birds. In Warrandyte, any dense patch of Hedge Wattle will have its wrens, although you wouldn't choose the plant if you had kids or dogs.

A source of water in a clear space will encourage the birds, again the larger birds will wash earlier, then the smaller birds. In my case it's the top of a water tank, plenty of entertainment if you have a comfortable seat nearby and a pair of binoculars. Also a field guide to birds, such as 'Simpson & Day'. You will soon be able to identify your local birds by sight and call, checking in the field guide for distribution, call, varieties, and similar birds.

It's Spring! What's happening in your backyard?

Contributions can either be dropped into the editor at 143 Brackenbury St, Warrandyte or via email at ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.au

March Magic in the Land of the Long White Cloud

By Peggy Safstrom

We had been brought by our New Zealand friends Arthur and Pat to Queenstown, in the South Island. There we were in their A-frame chalet overlooking a million dollar view of long Lake Wakitipu with its backdrop of steel grey jagged Mount Remarkable to the left, Thompson and Livingstone mountains in front and the Humboldt mountains to the right. One of those views where you tried to not even blink, it was so magnificent.

When Arthur discovered at early breakfast that we liked going on long walks, he insisted we spend a few days on the Routeburn Track. He would take us that day up to the 5000ft level of the Remarkables and assess if we would be up to the Routeburn.

So we set off at the base through a sheepy, tussocky field at 8am in cold wind, climbing gradually and then oh so steeply for five hours, the views getting wider and more magnificent. Wide views over smaller mountains, down lakes and valleys, till at last he let us stop for lunch. I was so exhausted - and hot! When I went to take off my warm gear, Arthur stopped me. "Cool down with them on, that's a rule, otherwise the wind will chill you."

Then we had to descend the track I had used both feet and hands to ascend. What a dreadful descent. Very wobbly knees by 5pm and the relief of the car. Then for two days much difficulty was found negotiating the 13 steps inside the beautiful chalet. But in spite of that, Arthur was convinced that if we had survived the Remarkables the four-day Routeburn wouldn't be too much for us.

Into our roomy day packs went four days food, spare clothes etc. We purchased woollen socks, hired boots, and borrowed thermal longjohns. With sleeping bags strapped on top we nervously set off.

The first day seemed an eternity with so many rests it wasn't funny. But we were no longer stiff and sore, and although we often groaned as we dragged ourselves up rocks -and worse- down steps made by long legged New Zealanders, we ate well, trying to reduce the food weight. By day four we were loping along at a great pace.

Day 3 was a rest day, i.e. a day of hiking and climbing without packs, which were left in the

hut. That was sheer delight. I just sat and waited for little birds to sit still long enough to film them, or the sun to shine on a waterfall. We climbed in and out of tree roots in foot-deep mosses, and clambered over rocks which we couldn't have done with packs on.

Beech trees grew out of the mosses. As they matured, mosses grew on them, and little beech trees grew out from the mosses. A fairyland. Vertical trunks. Horizontal branches. New slender vertical trunks. New horizontal branches with the sun shining through them. Aqua-blue tarns glimpsed through the leaves. Wonderful colours and textures of the trunks. Thick multicoloured leaves carpeting the mosses. And the little grey fantails, flitting past our faces. Flip flip in zig zags, keeping just ahead of our noses. Little wrens - but with no exclamation-mark tails, looking like little mice that have lost their tails in mousetraps.

The Routeburn Track is a bigger challenge than the famous Milford Track, which I would class as a beautiful walk. Both tracks can be walked independently or with guides. The former is called 'Freedom' walking. But you're not free of your pack, food or bedding. We kidded ourselves that the latter were 'Captive' walkers, but secretly we envied them sauntering along with only cameras slung over their shoulders.

Whether guided or not, the snow-capped mountains, the blue, beech fringed tarns, the rivers racing in great waves and eddies of emotion are there for all eyes to see. It is a new, wonderful experience. Anyone who can, should do it. You can expect to hear, after rain, way up the mountain somewhere, roaring torrents crashing into protruding boulders mercilessly, bringing them hurtling down the mountain. It is a very new experience to witness the fury racing down, hurtling, bashing, crashing, dashing, splashing - roaring, pouring, sprawling. All eyes grow wider at this white gulping monster, which after a few hours will be sweetly caressing little ferns and mosses as it wanders its way to the valley.

The grand scenery you can expect to encounter as you reach the top of a pass and look with disbelief at two sets of jagged, snow topped mountains before your eyes, and the narrow track frolicking its way in and out, down and down between them to the emerald valley beyond, makes even the weight of a pack or the absence of a pack totally immaterial. The Routeburn Track. 'Captive' or 'Free. Just DO IT.

Wildlife Rescue

By Julie Pryor



Yesterday a call came in to rescue a koala in Mitcham. The koala was in the middle of the Maroondah Highway. The koala had been contained and was at the Kleen Maid shop, the people there had put it in a storeroom.

All sounds good so far, but the lady who restrained the koala had been bitten and scratched. The next phone call was to say the koala had escaped and been able to climb into the ceiling of the store. This was all getting too hard for me, so I rang Wild Pro and met Alex at the shop. Fortunately the koala was sitting on top of a box in the storeroom and it was a reasonably easy rescue.

The injured lady by this time had disappeared. From here I took the koala to Derek Fairley, the Vet at Warrandyte. Derek did a Vet check on the animal and it appeared quite well, and a microchip was put in place, then the koala decided to bite Derek! It was time to let this healthy boy loose, he has been relocated to Wonga Park, as the middle of a 6 lane highway is not a good place to leave a koala.

Further to last month's koalas; Dally died of renal failure, further tests may be carried out and the big male from Smedley Road had a thyroid problem.

Other Wildlife in need of attention this month has been a Boo Book Owl, 2 Ringtail Possums 1 Brushtail Possum, a Kangaroo joey and an adult Kangaroo. A koala was reported to be in need of

help, by the time rescue people arrived the koala had moved on, this also happened to a Ringtail Possum this month, if you find injured wildlife if possible please stay with the animal until help arrives.

This week I have been having a great time, another shelter has asked me to baby-sit while they go on a holiday. Baby Bruiser the joey wombat has taken over. Bruiser still is at foot so he will follow feet anywhere, but when he has had enough of this he likes to bite. (Now you know where his name came from). If Bruiser does not want his bottle, he grabs the teat and folds it over and pushes it away. But like a true Wombat he sleeps all day and if he is woken up in the morning he is quite grumpy.

Please don't forget our Koala count is on Sunday the 21st

of November so please check your own backyard on this day. If any body has any spare time on Thursday the 18th of November the State Park would like people to help them with their count. If anyone can help please call the Park and let them know. This year 13 Councils will be



involved and if we are lucky the Totally Wild Program program on channel 10, and the Herald Sun may do a story.

From the Plan

Botanical values of State significance include three species threatened nationally, 18 threatened in Victoria and at least 81 species of regional conservation significance.

Source: WSP Draft management plan August 2004

Welcome

A big welcome to Keira, our newest member of FOWSP. Congratulations to committee members Lee and Geoff Speedy on the safe arrival of their beautiful daughter.

Many Thanks

Two weeks ago there was only one contribution (thanks to Rohan Smith) for the October issue and the editor was beginning to worry, but gradually articles began to trickle in by post and e-mail.

The Editor would like to thank the following people for responding to the plea for more contributions to the newsletter: Steven Katsineris, Michelle Hanslow, Ben Gotlib, Julie Pryor, Peggy Safstrom, Laurie Safstrom (article to appear in next month's newsletter) and Geoff Speedy.

Please keep the contributions coming. We can never have enough. Remember it is **your** contributions that make this newsletter what it is.



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Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
(*Cacatua galerita*)

This is one species of native bird that is definitely unwelcome in the FOWSP nursery at the WSP ranger's depot. Despite dangling discs and nets over boxes the cockatoos have again managed to wreak havoc amongst the polystyrene boxes and plastic pots, digging up and biting off our precious plants including a rare daisy from which we were about to collect seed.

It seems the only option might be to enclose the whole nursery in bird-proof netting.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Family \$20

Single \$15

Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

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