

February 2006

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

A New Year, A New Office



In January the Rangers finally moved into their brand new offices. The building was constructed last year by 4th year carpentry apprentices from Homes Glen TAFE, under the guidance of an instructor.

The office is light and airy and largely open plan with plenty of room for desks, computers, photocopier etc.

There is a separate meeting room and a kitchen area, as well as an outside deck with a magnificent view across to the steep densely wooded river escarpment.

At the present time it has not been decided where to locate the library that is used by both Park staff and Fowspians.

The meeting room will be available to the FOWSP committee for their monthly meetings.



Bush Backyard

The Small, but Remarkable Bell Miner

By Steven Katsineris

When I first visited the house we later bought in Haleys Gully, Hurstbridge I noticed the various birds in the yard, but my most vivid memory is of hearing the lovely 'tink' sound of the Bell Miner. The clear high-pitched and loud, bell-like call resounded throughout the gully as voices of the many Bell Miners continued the tinkling calls to marvellous effect.

Bell Miners are rather small, about 19cm, and often hard to see in foliage. I have not often seen them in our garden, as they prefer to live in the wetter and denser eucalypt woodland of the gully on the other side of Haleys Gully Road. I have seen several of them more frequently on branches of trees or flying between trees while walking along that side of the road.

The Bell Miner (or Bellbird) is olive-green in colour with a scarlet, triangle-shaped spot behind the eye. Bell Miners live in eucalypt woodland and temperate rainforest, where there is



reasonably shrubby understorey, usually in well-watered gullies, near creeks or rivers. They are sociable birds and live together in pairs, with helpers, in family groups and commonly in large colonies. Bell Miners nest communally, laying their eggs in a large nest in the fork of a tree. They lay up to three eggs.

Bell Miners feed on nectar and insects. One of their main food sources is the sugary coating produced by lerp insects that live on eucalypt leaves. They are territorial, scaring away other birds from their nests and also to protect their food sources.

The persistent and distinctive voice of the Bell

Miner is a familiar, everyday sound that resonates throughout Haleys Gully Road and other gullies around the area. It is a most incredibly beautiful sounding call and one that I never tire of hearing.

Coffee with the King (and Queen)

By Pat Coupar

The week before Christmas is a quiet time in Mallacoota – the calm before the storm of holiday makers that descend on this little town, its lake and its beaches.

We were sitting on our balcony overlooking the sparkling waters of the lake – deserted except for a few dozen swans feeding in the shallows – enjoying a cup of coffee. A male King Parrot resplendent in scarlet and green flew down to the feed tray less than a metre from where we were sitting. Shortly after he was joined by a female – less scarlet, more green, but duller. From their intimate greeting of each other, they were obviously a pair. Glancing at us now and again, they were quite at ease, deciding we were no threat.

The Australian King Parrot is a gentle, nice-natured parrot and one of the most stunningly beautiful. It was a privilege for us to have coffee with the King and his Queen.

An Orchard in the Garden

By Josh Revell (pers. comm)

Seen recently in a Warrandyte garden, a male Orchard Butterfly. This is a large dramatic swallowtail with striking black, white, red and blue wing patterns (females have more colour on the hindwings than males).



While the butterflies come into gardens in search of nectar, they are also seeking out citrus trees – the foodplant for their caterpillars – on which to lay eggs.

An Annoying Call

By Pat Coupar

It was towards the end of last year that I first noticed it. It woke me up in the mornings. I thought our phone was ringing in the other

room, but quickly realized the sound was too distant and must be someone else's phone. Why didn't they answer it? Perhaps they were away.

I kept hearing this ringing tone, most mornings and sometimes in the day. Always from the same direction. It occurred to me that it could possibly be a bird making the noise, though it was like no other bird call I have ever heard.



Asking questions of Google, I finally found one reference. Quote: *"the ring-tone phenomenon has been noted among songbirds in Britain with*

song thrushes, blackbirds and marsh warblers incorporating such sounds into their songs."

Armed with this knowledge I eventually tracked down a male Blackbird in the garden directly below our own and actually observed the bird doing its ring-tone call.

It must be a territorial call for he's still doing it and it's just as annoying, but at least now I know it is not an unanswered phone.

I would be very interested to hear of anyone else who has experienced this unusual mimic.

More Snippets Please

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

WSP Track Clearing

By Pat Coupar

As quoted in the WSP Management Plan (Aug 2004), the number one aim of fire management is *"to protect human life, property and Park values from damage by wildfire."* To do this as safely and quickly as possible it is necessary to provide good access for fire tankers along 'Management Vehicle Only' (MVO) tracks.

There are many kilometres of MVO's throughout the various reserves of WSP (more than five kilometres on Fourth Hill alone). Over the years many of these have become narrow due to the growth of vegetation along the track edges. In addition, some of the tracks are steep and some have sharp corners making turning a tanker – new tankers are wider – difficult and possibly dangerous.

Grasses and small shrubs along track edges can be cut each fire season with a brush cutter or side arm mower. As I understand it, given the limited resources available (money, people and time), there are several options for clearing trees and larger vegetation from the side of MVO tracks

Cut and chip. This involves hiring a 'chipper' (expensive) to turn the cut vegetation into chips which are left on site in piles that eventually rot down, but kill the vegetation beneath them. This method has been used at

Yarra Brae where most of the undergrowth is Burgan.

Cut and burn. Piles of cut vegetation can only be burnt on site if the wood is not too green and if there is room to burn such as along, or adjacent to, an existing fire break.

Cut and remove. Extremely labour intensive and slow. This method was carried out on some of the Fourth Hill track clearing last year, with small branches and foliage left on site and large trunks cut up and taken away for firewood.

Cut and leave. Probably the most controversial, as the felled trees are dragged from the edge of the tracks into the bush and left to rot down over time.

All these methods have negative impacts (visually and ecologically) and have attracted some criticism from the public and local residents. Rather than take a softer, more aesthetic approach, I gather, that by going in hard it will mean that there should not be a need to do such major works again for at least ten years.

We may not like the look or the fact that so much vegetation has been cleared, but when a wildfire comes through Warrandyte again, as inevitably one day it will, we may be thankful that the tankers are able to access most areas of the Park and the private land that abut it with relative ease.

A New Scourge on Warrandyte's Weeds!

By Steve Munro

New Environment Restoration Group Formed

The Stony Creek & Yarra Junction Restoration Group (SCYRG), or 'scourge' to its friends, was recently formed to try and restore the lower Stony Creek reserve to its former glory.

Concentrating on the Stony Creek area below Research Rd., the group is trying to control weed infestations and repopulate with native species. Work started in early Spring 2005 with broom pulling. More recently, the group started an assault on high-climbing English Ivy, through cutting and spot poisoning. English Ivy is a particular problem in the area as it creeps up trees and comes to dominate the upper stories of the vegetation. Already, results are starting to appear.

At ground level some ferns are able to get more light. At canopy level, the Ivy is dying back and native trees starting to shrug off their entanglements of Ivy. Hopefully, far fewer Ivy seeds are being generated and set.

There is an active membership of more than twenty local residents. Weeding and/or planting events are held twice a month, alternating between Saturdays and Sundays. The weeding events have attracted between six and 15 attendees. Some replanting of native species propagated from seed has started. The group also held a social gathering, a local bush walk followed by a BBQ, on Saturday 10th December.

Any FOWSP members are welcome to join and come along and help us 'scourge' the weeds near the Stony Creek and Yarra River junction. Further information from scyrg@hotmail.com or from the group's initiator, Leon Grinszpan on 9844 5995, or you could contact Steve Munro on 9844 1307.

Contemplating Writing and Life.

By Steven Katsineris

I was working on the computer the other day writing an article. The children were at school and I was in the mood to write. Sometimes there are too many tasks to fit in, some days it's hard to focus. And some days everything just seems to come together. The room where I type faces out into the back yard, so it's a very nice work setting. While I'm sitting there typing and looking out the window, I paused and saw a pair of resident Scrub Wrens flitting around between the ground and the shrubs feeding on seeds. Then I notice three Spotted Turtle-necked Doves also walking around eating.

In between typing and observing the birds, I'd stop to get a hot drink downstairs. While making the tea, I noticed a pair of Eastern Rosellas and a pair of Crimson Rosellas in the trees and on the ground feeding. Then Currawongs, Cockatoos, Noisy Miners and Galahs.

Despite the incessant, but pleasurable distractions I managed to finish my article. Perhaps the distractions helped, I was slow getting the piece done, but it was a lovely day and I was very satisfied with the resulting article. Like most things in life, writing is a journey and often it is best to take ones time, to think calmly and mull over things. It's more enjoyable and the outcome usually much better, whatever art, profession or pastime we are engaged in. Really what's the use

of rushing about doing things, if we don't give ourselves time to experience the magic moments in life? They remind us why we do the things we like to do. For me writing is a calm, thoughtful activity, a sort of therapy and not something that I want to do in a hurry. And of course if we don't live, observe and sense the world around us, we can't truly gain insights and understanding that allows us to speak or write properly about this world.



Worth Repeating

Groups warn on plans to take Yarra water

By Melissa Fyfe environment reporter

Proposals to take more water out of the Yarra River should be scrapped immediately, environment and community groups say.

They cite a yet-to-be-released scientific report by Melbourne Water that shows the river is stressed from a lack of flow along many of its reaches.

It is believed the report recommends 108 healthy flow regimes for nine stretches of river. But the river's current flows only fully match these recommendations in 25 of the 108.

The Yarra Riverkeepers – a community group formed to protect the river – and Environment Victoria, the state's peak green group, have asked the State Government to rule out any extraction of extra drinking water from the river.

Although the Thomson dam is Melbourne's biggest reservoir, the city extracts 70 per cent of its drinking water from the Yarra.

Under proposals outlined in the Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy, an extra 128 billion litres of water could come from four places along the river: Dight's Falls, below O'Shannassy Reservoir, Cement Creek weir and increased

pumping into Sugarloaf Reservoir. But Ian Penrose from Yarra Riverkeepers said the Melbourne Water report showed the river could not withstand lesser flows.

"Melbourne already makes a heavy demand on the Yarra River by drawing the bulk of its drinking water from it. We are worried about any more extractions," he said.

The Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy, which will decide Melbourne's water future, is open for public comment. It looks at ways to augment supplies given the demands of population growth and climate change. The Yarra options are among many proposals being considered.

A spokesman for Environment Minister John Thwaites said the Government was seeking expert advice on environmental flows and the environmental effect of each proposal. "We are not going to go ahead with any proposal that damages the environment," he said. The strategy's preliminary draft would be released in the next few months. The scientific study on the flows was being peer-reviewed and would be released soon.

Last week, Melbourne Water and the Environment Protection Authority revealed five "hot spots" along the river suspected of delivering sewage into the city's major waterway.

Source: The Age 19/1/06

Market Volunteers

A big thank you to the following people who volunteered their time on the FOWSP trailer at the December Warrandyte market: Ray Kruger, Marion Thomson, Sue Shepherd, Antje Bauer, John Hanson, Marie and Wolfgang Krause

A special thank you to Geoff Speedy for delivering the trailer to the market and to Wolfgang Krause for returning it.

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.

FOWSP ASSETS

Over the years, mostly through grants, FOWSP has accumulated a variety of assets which are available for members to borrow. These include:

2 canoes and all safety equipment
Underwater camera
Digital camera
GPS

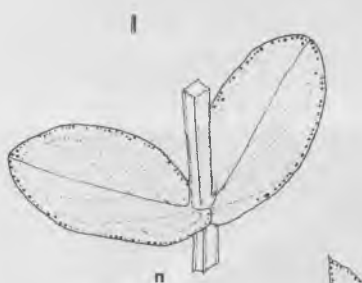
These are kept at the rangers depot at Pound Bend.

Yellow Perils

Weeds are a constant threat to our dwindling native bushland. There are so many of them it's hard to know where to start and which ones to control. Some weeds have been around Warrandyte for many years and their impact, although serious, does not require urgent action. Among the weeds being targeted by rangers at Warrandyte State Park at present are three that are relatively new to the area - all have the potential to be a major problem if they were to spread. Two of them belong to the same genus, and all are classified as noxious and environmental weeds. By finding these weeds at an early stage of their infestation there is a real chance of eradicating them from Warrandyte or at the very least preventing them from becoming a serious threat to the Park.

The weeds are:

St Peter's Wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*)



A dense plant which grows up to 1 metre high with thin, light green, prominently veined, rounded leaves that clasp (ie. no stalks) the square stems. The 5-petalled, yellow flowers occur in crowded clusters at the end of branches.

The plant usually grows in damp mud in open sunny areas along the banks of river, creeks and swamps, but could also occur in moist pastures.

Only known from a few places in Victoria, including the Woori Yallock Creek, and more recently along Jumping Creek and the banks of the Yarra River at Warrandyte.

St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

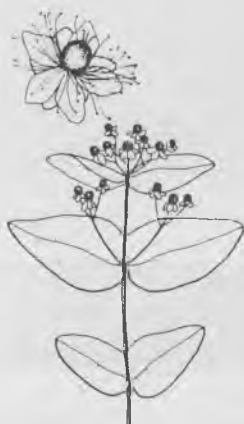
A perennial herb which grows up to 1.2 metres high. Stems grow from a central woody crown. Yellow flowers occur in clusters at the tips of branches. The plant will grow on drier sites than St Peter's Wort and Tutsan and it can be distinguished from them by its leaves which are longer and narrower.

In Warrandyte St John's Wort invades disturbed areas such as the slopes of Stane Brae and can also be found amongst native vegetation at Pound Bend.



Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*)

An erect shrub up to 1.5 metres high with distinctive reddish stems which emerge from a woody base (rootstock). The thin, pale green leaves, (longer and more pointed than St Peter's Wort) also have a reddish tinge and are stem clasp. The 5-petalled, yellow flowers have prominent stamens and are followed by globular fruit which, over summer, turn from green to red to black.



Found in damp shaded forested areas, along creeks and rivers and may encroach onto adjoining pastures. Known from many sites around the State - a particularly bad infestation occurs along the Howqua River near Mansfield. Only a few years ago this plant was relatively uncommon in Warrandyte, but recently Tutsan has exploded on the scene with infestations having been found in many places close to the river.

Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*)

An erect herb usually around 30-80 cms high. Starting out as a rosette of stalked wrinkled leaves, the plant develops one or more stems and the deeply divided dark green leaves become stalkless. The flowers, which occur in clusters at the ends of branches, are bright yellow typical daisy florets.

Occurs in southern Victoria generally on degraded land. Ragwort has not yet taken off in Warrandyte although infestations are common close by, however, occasional plants have been found growing in relatively weed-free bushland within the State Park.

It is vital that we control all these weeds before they take control of our precious bushland. You can help by keeping your eyes open for any of these weeds. If you think you may have seen any of these please notify the Park on 9844 2659.

Note: For more detailed descriptions and photographs of these weeds refer to 'Noxious Weeds of Australia' by Parsons and Cuthbertson which can be found in the FOWSP library.



"I SPY"

By B.G



Topical Tropical

Cam Beardsell, ranger, informed a group of Friends about a 'newly found' tropical grass (C4) that has been found growing naturally in the Yarra area. It is called *Isachne globosa*. He also referred to several other 'rare' grasses growing in the area.

Hot House

Noel, Ray and Lea have demolished one of the older hot houses which was becoming dilapidated. The cleared area will be used as an alternate work area in colder weather so that volunteers can warm themselves in the sun.

Staff Shift

At last! The Park staff are moving into the newly completed Pound Bend depot building.

Seminars Shifted

The Wednesday night environmental seminars sponsored by Manningham Council are re-starting on February 1st this year – at the Warrandyte South Hall, 66 Hall Rd, Sth Warrandyte. They will be held on the first Wednesday of each month. Further information, ring Jeanette Baker 98409129

FOWSP Fungi

Lee Speedy has revealed that FOWSP is releasing a new brochure titled 'Warrandyte's Fungi' in time for the 2006 fungi season.

Dichondra Difficult

Julie James was 'pricking out' Dichondra recently. Her comment was "it's not as easy to do as it first appears."

Riverside Revegetating

Joy Dahl was at the depot recently to discuss plant needs for revegetating their riverside property near Pound Bend Tunnel.

Communing at Currawong

By Ben Gotlib



NO roaring or revving engines, no chanting crowds, no commercial advertising, no frenzied activity, no circuses. Just a large crowd of over 130, a community gathering of people who had participated in environmental events, seminars, walks and a range of other on the ground activities, all supporting the natural environment in Manningham.

They were all brought together by dedicated 'M.C' officers from the Environmental Unit of Manningham Council.

It was Wednesday 14th December 2005, late afternoon, pre-dusk and the location was Currawong Bush Park. A group of musicians provided pleasant background music which blended with the naturally peaceful environs.

Those present were able to enjoy various nibbles, sandwiches and hot and cold delicacies, all supplied and distributed by the Blue Bicycle Café at Warrandyte. And the food was washed down with ample fruit juices, soft drinks and some wine.

As the dusk settled in, some 'on the spot' networking was encouraged between the people present from the wide range of local environmental groups represented. Of course as Christmas was approaching a Kris Kringle had been organised with some success. There was also a raffle of varied environmentally appropriate prizes.

In all a most unusual event, well organised and enjoyed by all. It is good to know that so many people are working together (often unbeknown to each other) to maintain and improve our natural environment.



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Flower Spider (Family Thomisidae)



Flower Spiders, also known as Crab Spiders, are the masters of camouflage resting amongst the petals of flowers. They do not make a web, but wait for their prey to come to them and ambush them. They are particularly common on native shrubs like Grevilleas where feed on a variety of insects such as flies, bees, beetles and butterflies that visit the flowers for nectar.

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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