

March 2006

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Pound Bend Tunnel Facelift



Following a tragic drowning in the vicinity of Pound Bend Tunnel in December 2004 and flood erosion damage, the popular swimming spot at the tunnel was closed off to the public. Initially a temporary plastic fence was erected, but this was ineffective as people climbed over to access the swimming area over summer. This was then replaced by an imposing cyclone wire fence.

Reconstruction work on the site began in early summer. While work is still needed to complete the project, the actual beach area was open again to the public in time for the hot weather.



Bush Backyard

Snapped on a Solar Light

By Olive Walters



My daughter and I were sitting at the dinner table one evening when we heard a plop on a slate-paved area outside. The frog had emerged from a downpipe. While we were admiring it, the frog jumped onto a solar light and posed there so I rushed for my new digital camera and snapped it.

I haven't seen the frog again, but it has called several times when the rain has been pouring down – which it has done lately. It's nice to know some frogs are hanging in here.

The White-browed Scrub Wren

By Steven Katsineris

We have a pair of White-browed Scrub Wrens resident in our back garden and the adjoining nature strip. The area has the thickest vegetation in our yard, with creepers growing on the fence, a large wild rose bush, native shrubs and other dense undergrowth. There are also trees, woodpiles, a cottage garden with water containers and open spaces in the backyard. This provides the ideal habitat for these small birds, dense - shrubs for protection, nest sites and feeding areas.

We see them flitting about together between trees and bushes and on the ground foraging among the leaf litter and piles of wood searching for food. Though they are wary and alert for predators as they move about, they are seemingly untroubled by our presence when we are near them.

White-browed Scrub Wrens are very small, measuring between 11-13cm. They have a territorial song, a persistent harsh scolding call and are also fine mimics.

The White-browed Scrub Wren is the most common and widespread of the five species of Scrub Wren. It usually inhabits dense dim undergrowth of forests, woodlands, coastal scrubs, mangroves, heaths, but also parks and gardens with thick low shrubs and creepers.

White-browed Scrub Wrens breed from July to January. The nest is domed shape and made of loosely woven grass, leaves and twigs, lined with feathers. The nest is usually concealed in thick undergrowth close to the ground. Two to three pale blue (greyish) eggs are laid.

The White-browed Scrub Wren feeds on insects, their larvae, other small invertebrates and seeds. Where I sit typing, my view through the window is into the backyard and I often see the White-browed Scrub Wrens hopping briskly around on the ground just a metre away from me feeding among the leaves and undergrowth. These enchanting little birds are always a pleasure to watch.

Ring Tone Phenomenon

(In response to last months article "An Annoying Call" by Pat Coupar)

By Joy Dahl and Malcolm Smith

Yes, we hear the ring tone phenomenon often here in our bedroom overlooking the Yarra near Pound Bend, usually at dawn, and particularly when we don't want to get up early. We eventually figured out that it was a bird, not a real phone, but we didn't know which bird to blame. I was favouring the Magpie. But now that you have identified the Blackbird as the culprit, I realise I should have known.

When we were temporarily living in Ivanhoe next the Darebin Creek, I often saw and heard an amazing Blackbird which seemed to have an unlimited number of calls. I used to respond by whistling what I heard it sing - as close to it as possible with my limited whistling skill. The bird would then answer with a similar tune but adding more variations. We could go on like that for twenty or thirty minutes, a very pleasant accompaniment to household chores. Every once in a while I would hear the phone ring but when I answered it there was no one on the line. It all makes sense now. Thanks for clearing up the mystery.

More Snippets Please

Let us know what is 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

The Giant Gippsland Earthworm

By Sebastian Buckingham



Giant Gippsland Earthworm *Megascaloides australis* outside the town of Korumburra, South Gippsland.

The Giant Gippsland Earthworm relocation project aimed to protect a population of *Megascaloides australis* from a road development. The population was found during a preliminary survey for a road realignment on the South Gippsland Highway. Over seven hundred individual worms were moved to a safe area adjacent to the new road. The relocation of giant earthworms had not been attempted before.

The worms were often over one metre in length when mature. Digging up the worms required considerable care. To avoid stress or injury to the worms only trowels or bare hands could be used to uncover them.

Though the giant worm is found over a relatively large area of South Gippsland from Leongatha to Warragul, the species is classified as vulnerable. Populations are small and discrete in area and are found almost exclusively on steeply sloping farmland (B. Van Praagh, pers. comm.). Earth moving that effects soil moisture levels such as dam building and direct soil disturbance such as ploughing and road construction are some of the issues that face the giant worm. It is believed in the past that the worm existed more commonly under forest or woodland rather than open fields where it is mainly found today. The worms were filmed at the relocation site last year for the recently featured documentary 'Life in the Undergrowth' narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

Library Notes

By Judy Green

The FOWSP/Park library has now been relocated to the new building. It is in the very pleasant meeting room - just to the right as you enter the front door. There is even a table and chairs where you can sit and peruse the books as you wish.

The library, with well over 200 publications plus tapes, journals and magazines is open in normal office hours. Most books are available for loan although some marked with a red sticker may not be taken away.

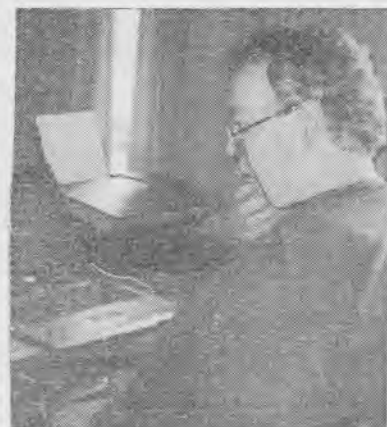
We do have a number of books that have been borrowed and not entered in the record book which means we cannot chase them up. If you have any of the following PLEASE return them as soon as possible - others may be waiting for them. Their numbers are EN504, FL660, W1201, W1202, W1203, W1217, ED409 and IS708. Somebody must have these in their bookshelves.

Sadly Missed

It is with great sadness we report the death last month of Lee Tindale. Lee and his wife Jan have been long-time members of FOWSP and supporters of the local environment. Writing in the Warrandyte Diary as Smokey Joe, Lee always gave a plug for our group with typical tongue-in-cheek humour.

Lee was a professional journalist. For over 30 years he was a driving force in the success of the monthly community newspaper the Warrandyte Diary, giving his time for free as co-editor and sports writer.

He died on February 4th aged 64. Our condolences to Jan and the family.



In Search of the Beech Orange

By Alwynne Buntine

It was a pleasant sunny day in mid December last year when, with my friends Irene and Bruce Fuhrer, we set out to engage in an activity I find fascinating – searching for fungi in the bush. This time we were going to try and find the Beech Orange (*Cuttaria gunnii*), a fungus that is restricted to the Southern Myrtle Beech (*Northophagus cunninghamii*).

The fungus forms woody galls on the trees, mainly on the branches, but to a lesser degree on the trunk. These galls then become the fruiting sites for subsequent years. The fruiting bodies appear from late spring to summer and hang in clusters from the galls. The immature fungi are enclosed in a pinkish orange membrane which ruptures as the fruiting body expands revealing a pattern of concave orange depressions from where the spore is released.

Our quest for this unusual and elusive fungus led us to the myrtle beech forests in the area of Lady Talbot Drive near Marysville in north eastern Victoria. On first seeing the fungus, it looks as though the trees have bunches of small orange fruit, up to the size of a golf ball, hanging from the branches rather like little oranges. However on closer examination you realize that it is a fungus not a fruit.



The relationship of this fungus with the myrtle beech is a parasitic one, but usually it doesn't kill the tree unless the main trunk is severely affected. Instead, the tree suffers the attack for an indeterminate period and then sheds the branch that is infected.

I had never seen the Beech Orange in reality before, so imagine my delight when we stopped near a stand of myrtle beech and on leaving the vehicle and looking up, saw the clusters of orange fungi hanging there. Standing in that ancient forest, a relic of Gondwana, observing a process probably millions of years old, I suddenly felt small and insignificant.

We were very lucky to have found them as these unusual fungi do not necessarily appear in the same area from season to season, so we were indeed privileged when our quest ended in success.

Foot Note: The Beech Orange is a source of bush tucker, smelling very vaguely like sweet apricots – I didn't taste it!

An amateur naturalist reporting from sub-tropical Queensland

By Olive Walters

I cut the top from a *Callitris columellaris* (a local cypress) to transform into my Christmas Tree 2005 and found among the branches an interesting bright yellow cocoon – or so I thought.

I snipped the twig bearing this and popped it into a large jar and made a top from a piece of insect screen. I was intending to share the emerged 'whatever' with the little great nieces who were enlivening our Christmas.

After the Christmas/Boxing Day gatherings of extended family had finished I remembered to check the cocoon only to find a swarm of tiny spiders had emerged and were climbing through the insect screen top and descending a landing net of spider web to invade my laundry – not a beautiful butterfly or even a brown moth to share with the little great nieces.

The spiders still in the jar were returned to the garden.

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.

PLEASE NOTE

The nursery is open for plant sales (by donation) every Thursday. Please note new opening times for Thursdays 9.30am to 12.30pm and the first Sunday of each month 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

New Prices

Members 80 cents

Nonmembers \$1.20

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.



Sunday Walks 2006

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.

Walks are FREE. Bookings are ESSENTIAL. For more information contact Jeanette 9840 9129

April 2nd

'Fourth Hill Gold'

Ken Crook

Park gate Tunnel St, Warrandyte. (Mel ref. 35 F2)

May 7th

'River Walk Jumping Ck to Black Flat' Cathy Willis

Stone House Café carpark Tills Drive, Warrandyte. (Mel ref. 23 H12). Note: we will car pool to Jumping Ck and walk back to Stone House.

FINAL REMINDER

Subscription for 2006 were due on 1/01/06. This is a final reminder if you have not renewed your membership yet and would like to do so. Please fill in the form on the back of this newsletter.

FOWSP Committee 2006

Joan Broadberry	9846 1218	Treasurer
Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor
Peter Curry	9844 0958	
Geoff Speedy	9437 0894	
Lee Speedy	9437 0894	Membership Secretary
Mike Coupar	9844 1650	
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797	Minutes Secretary
Martin Hiley		
Artur Muchow	0415383328	
Winsome Coutts		
Michelle Hanslow	0402251577	

Nursery Manager 0408317327

Park Office 9844 2659

Wildlife Rescue

Julie Pryor 9722 1117

Market

Marie Krause 9712 0498

Manningham City Council Environment Seminars 2006

The seminars are FREE

Held on the 1st Wednesday of the month, no bookings required

Time: at 7.30pm



Please Note: NEW VENUE: South Warrandyte Hall, 66-68 Hall Rd, Sth Warrandyte (Mel ref. 35 J8)

April 5 th	'Saving energy around the house'	Bill Pemberton
May 3 rd	'A stroll through Mongrel Downs-Tanani Desert'	Rob Dabal
June 7 th	'Rakali the water rat'	Geoff Williams

Thursday Activity Group (TAG)

The activities will take place on the first Thursday of the month from 10.00am to 12md. Either meet at the depot or on site.

So 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).

TAG dates: April 6th Techniques of rabbit control at Pound Bend Reserve. Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Mel ref 23 A11)

Market Volunteers

A big thank you to the following people who volunteered their time on the FOWSP trailer at the February Warrandyte market: Ray Kruger, Joan MacMahon, Alan Woolcock, Cath Andrew, Julie Bishop 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.

Deadline for April newsletter is April 2nd

Rabbit Fact File

History

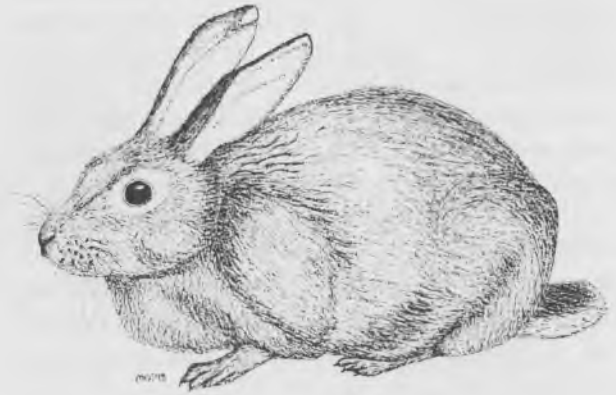
- Domestic rabbits arrived in Australia with the First Fleet in 1788. After establishing in Victoria from a release at Winchelsea in 1859, rabbits colonized New South Wales and Queensland. By 1900 they had spread to Western Australia and the Northern Territory.
- The rate of spread of rabbits in Australia was the fastest of any colonising mammal anywhere in the world.
- While myxomatosis outbreaks in the early 1950s controlled rabbits for a short time, their numbers returned rapidly because conventional control programs were not used to manage the surviving rabbits. There is a risk that history will repeat itself if current control programs lose momentum.

Numbers

- There are currently an estimated 600 million rabbits in Australia - an historically low number.
- Since the occurrence of rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHO) in 1995-1996, rabbit populations in Victoria have declined by 93%.
- These declines have been maintained over recent years by the combined effects of RHO and conventional rabbit control.
- Rabbits can breed so quickly that in optimal conditions a single breeding pair can produce 180 offspring in 18 months.
- An increase in the number of RHO-immune breeding rabbits has the potential to result in a rapid and significant increase in Victorian rabbit populations.

Impacts

- Rabbits are the most serious vertebrate pest in Victoria.
- Rabbits represent the fourth major contributor to Australia's landscape deterioration behind white settlement, land clearing and grazing by domestic livestock.
- In areas where up to 64 rabbits exist per hectare, not uncommon in Victoria, their impact is equivalent to the impact of six grazing sheep per hectare.



Source: *Under Control – Pest Plant & Animal Management News*, No 32, December 2005

News from the Committee

February 2006

Rangers Report

- White footed Dunnart, which has not been sighted since 1976, has been observed at One Tree Hill. The committee approved the funding of 10 habitat boxes at the value of \$50 each. An article for our newsletter regarding the dunnart boxes has been requested and will be published next month.
- The new rangers office is complete and the move into the new facility is just about complete.
- Support was provided for the end of January fires.

Nursery Report

- Nursery going well. Orders, which are mainly small ones, are on schedule. Plants are also being grown for Wattle Day and for sale to the general public. Will be doing a sale around festival time.
- Josh is the official Parks Vic grant liaison officer.
- Nursery now open 9.30 - 12.30 - we going to have to put the Thursday afternoon walks back by about 15 minutes.
- In line with the AGM, plant prices will be increased to 80 cents for members and \$1.20 for non-members from 31st March 2006

Wilderness Shangri-la

By Steven Katsineris

In my mid to late teens and early 20's I spent most of my holidays at a large sheep farm that belonged to a friend of my uncles in the Central Highlands of Tasmania. It is an area of high rainfall, many miles from the nearest town and much of the farm is still wild, uncleared forest and abundant in wildlife. The air there is chilly, crisp and fresh. The water icy, clear and tastes superb. Every time I traveled there I felt an elation that grew, as I got closer to this exquisite place.

Sometimes I'd go there with my dogs or a couple of friends, but most frequently by myself. I loved the solitude and tranquility of the place and would stay at one of the remote huts in the bush. It is an alpine region. The weather was exceptionally changeable, even in summer and it could experience several changes in a day. It was often windy, it snowed a lot, there were furious storms and it could rain for days on end. Sometimes the roads would be flooded and the district cut off for several days. People had to be prepared for the sudden extreme variations in nature and you had to be able to rely on yourself.

I would spend my days mainly bush walking and discovering the wonderful area. Usually I'd be up early, have breakfast, pack a lunch and set off for the whole day. Sometimes I'd go out for the morning and be back in the afternoon for a late lunch and spend the rest of the day sitting in the sun reading, deep in thought, drinking tea and watching the wildlife.

In my days wandering around the farm, I'd walk through diverse habitats from dense, damp, ferny gullies, with creeks flowing through them, among tall forests of gum and wattle, sodden swamps full of cushion plants, thick grassland areas, moss-covered plateaus with masses of Tee-tree growing around them, over rocky and rugged hills, to the surrounding craggy mountains. During these walks I'd observe a lot of animals, including Fallow Deer, Wombats, Red-necked Wallabies, Bettongs, Pademelons, Echidnas, Platypus, Tiger Snakes, Copperhead Snakes, a wide variety of birds and occasionally a Tasmanian Devil or an Eastern Native Cat.

I would regularly stop along the way to pause and ponder in amazement at these various beautiful places. I was particularly captivated by the deep, shady gullies; I liked the serene feeling of being in an ancient and pristine lost world among the imposing, majestic eucalypt trees and enormous man-ferns. I'd sit or stand there in the midst of this thick humid understorey of the forest floor in a reflective mood, watching the shafts of sunlight filtering through the giant trees and take

in the minutest details, intense scents and immerse myself in the overwhelming atmosphere of the forest.

Most often my roaming would bring me to the rocky outcrops at the foot of Table Mountain, which I would then climb. Once at the top I would sit and rest, eat lunch and view the wide world from there. It was my favourite spot and even now after many travels it is still my most loved place. From the peak it is a stunning sight. In every direction the vast sweeping scene is almost entirely of trees, mountains, hills and lakes, with only a few cleared patches of land and the narrow road north towards Lake Crescent in view.

Once while pensively sitting on the rocks in the warm sun enjoying the outstanding view, I watched spellbound as a Wedge-tailed Eagle soared in the clear blue sky in front of me. It came so close to the edge several times I imagined I could just reach out and touch it. It circled for some time, but eventually, with a few flaps of its striking wings, rose on the slight breeze and slowly disappeared into the distance. It was a truly enchanting, magic moment.

Perhaps it's the sense of isolation and being alone there on top of a mountain, amid the vast secluded forest, but it always felt deeply spiritual up there. I always felt profoundly connected with my own soul and close to the spirit of the earth and heaven in this place.

The area is an astonishingly beautiful place. I had plenty of time to read, to think, to reflect and felt that my visits there were profoundly enriching experiences that made me more clear-headed and wiser. The long bushwalks gave me a sense of joy and contentment, but also gave me a lot of time to think deeply about life. Many of the directions I took in later life were as a result of the decisions I made there in my late teens. My senses were altogether stimulated in this wild place and I always left feeling refreshed, uplifted and inspired. For me it was a place of wonderment, an earthy paradise, my own exhilarating wilderness Shangri-la.

I haven't been there for a long time, but even now, many years later, when every so often I need to feel calm and content, I close my eyes and in my mind I go there. Even if it is just vivid memories in the recesses of my mind, I can still feel this place alive inside me. We all have special, intimate places that exist in our hearts, where we go to escape life's tribulations, for me this is it.



"I SPY"

By B.G



Words on Walking

Early February lunchtime walk was led by two rangers – Kylie and Jodie. At the same time another group of walkers was led by Josh, nursery manager.

Walking - Web

The Victorian National Parks Association has issued its 'Bushwalking and Activities' program booklet for January – June 2006. It includes items such as: 'Boot washing – Cinnamon Fungus threat'; 'The great Australian bushwalk 2006'; 'Park Mates survey team'; 'a Warrandyte pot pourri walk, early March'; 'Longridge, The Common walk, early May'; (Ken Crook, a Fowspian is the leader of the two local walks). Plus lots of other walks.

For more information ring VNPA 9347 5188 or web: www.vnpa.org.au

Dargo 'Delegate'

Adam Whitchurch, a ranger at the Alpine National Park (based at Dargo) visited the Pound Bend nursery on a Thursday at the end of February. His comment on what he saw? "I'm impressed with the industrious activity of the numerous enthusiastic volunteers here."

During 2001, whilst doing a weed survey Adam found a new plant species for Victoria.

P361706 and P362992

is the location of a tree hazard assessment and site rehabilitation program. The site is better known as the 'Harris Gully Block.'

Visitors Visting

Jenny Kelly put in an order for 140 revegetation plants for the Wonga Park part of Warrandyte. Bruce Gullen arrived to join up as a FOWSP member. Bruce lives near the source of Jumping Creek.

Timely Trail

By Ben Gotlib

THE ALTERED LAND Environmental Trail

is jointly produced by Parks Victoria and the National Gallery of Victoria.

This concept uses 47 paintings by artists such as: John Grover, Nicholas Chevalier, Eugene von Guerard, Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Arthur Streeton, Jane Sutherland, Lin Onus, Penleigh Boyd ('Wattles of Warrandyte), and several others, to look at the environmental aspects of the scene depicted.



In a small (free) booklet the paintings are dealt with in terms of related indigenous history, the effect of introduced flora and fauna, species loss, changes to water flow etc. You can follow the paintings at the Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square.

The booklet containing photos and an environmental paragraph to each, was written and completed by a team of eleven people. This is a new look at old paintings.

"The arrival of Europeans with their sheep and cattle in the 19th century resulted in rapid change to the Victorian landscape. Extensive areas of land were cleared for agriculture, mining forestry and grazing wrought dramatic change to the vegetation, fauna and rivers. As a consequence seven of Victoria's 28 native vegetation types have been substantially reduced in area since European settlement, and less the 1% of the original grasslands remain."

Get to the N.G.V, get the booklet, look at the paintings.



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European Wasp

Wasps are a pest even in their northern hemisphere countries of origin. They were first recorded in Australia as recently as 1977. Wasps are most aggressive when defending their nests, unlike bees, they can withdraw their sting and use it again and again.

FOWSP Membership Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Email.....

Special Interest:.....

Membership \$20

Concession \$10

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