

September 2006

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Springtime in our State Park

By Pat Coupar

Despite the driest August since 1998, Warrandyte State Park has again put on a wonderful colourful display of wildflowers.

As always the best places to see the show are the dry slopes and ridges of Fourth Hill and Timber Reserve. While the nearby Council reserves of Tindal's Wildflower Reserve (south of the river) and Professor's Hill (north of the river) are also worth a visit.

Flowering wattles include common species like Golden, Spreading, Thin-leaf (Snake) and Prickly Moses as well as some rarer species.

Purple pea flowers are in evidence with Hovea,

Purple coral-pea and the ferny-leaved Austral Indigo.

Early Nancy, always the first of the lilies to appear, is in full bloom on the forest floor along with several Greenhood Orchids and the first of the Diurus (Leopard) orchids. And there is so much more to come.

In 1994 a number of rabbit exclusion fences (approximately 50 metres by 50 metres) were constructed on Fourth Hill and Timber Reserve.

The areas chosen were selected because of their high diversity of wildflowers (especially

orchids) and relatively low amount of weed invasion.

The fences have been monitored over the years. Ongoing maintenance has mainly involved delicate hand weeding of *Briza maxima* (Quaking Grass). Orchid counts within the fenced areas has shown that keeping rabbits out has increased both number and diversity of orchids.

Over the intervening years several of the fences have been extended. The exclusion coops have also been used as a secure place to plant back some of Warrandyte's rare or threatened species.

While the public are requested to stay out of the fenced areas, there area plenty of broad management tracks and smaller walking paths throughout Fourth Hill and Timber Reserve.

I went walking on the last day of August. It was 23°C. The bush was dry and crackly underfoot – it always is and, strangely, that's exactly how Warrandyte's delicate ephemeral wildflowers like it!

The show has only just begun. Don't miss it.



Bush Backyard

Terracotta Clean Up

By Pat Coupar

At the entrance to our house, near the front door, I have a number of terracotta pots of various shapes and sizes. While one or two have a sole occupant, most have been planted with a variety of local wildflowers such as Running Postman, Grass Trigger Plants, Twining Glycine and a selection of peas and daisies.

About once a year, after the cold and damp of winter, I give my terracotta pots a thorough going over – both inside and out!

Armed with a stiff nylon brush and a bucket of hot water I scrub the outside of the pots, removing any algae and dirt. I remove any leggy plants that have not thrived and trim those that have become a little unruly.

While I have basically stuck to indigenous plants for my pot garden, this year I have succumbed to the lure of the Agarve – mainly because I was given a couple of plants from my daughter and they are so quick and easy to grow for a dramatic effect.

As with most of my taller terracottas, I fill the bottom third of the pot with broken pieces of polystyrene – good for drainage and as well as reducing the amount of potting mixture required. Once planted, I top the mix with a layer of small white stones that contrast well with the orange-red pot as well as preventing the mix from drying out.

The pots and their plants are a great source of pleasure for me and interest to visitors. Having them just outside the front door, I notice them every day whenever I go in or out.



The Elusive Powerful Owl

By Steven Katsineris

Over the years, while walking in the remnant bush opposite our house in the early morning, late afternoon or evenings I have often heard an impressively loud, low, far-flung “whoo-hoo” sound. I was fairly sure the voice sounded like that of the Powerful Owl, but the sound would stop and I could never observe the bird or birds to find out the owl responsible for the call.

Powerful Owls are shy and will often remain quiet and motionless when people are near, which makes them difficult to see.

We have a lot of Ring-tailed Possums (one of the main prey of Powerful Owls) in our yard and around the Hurstbridge area. On a couple of occasions, I have found the tails of Ring-tailed Possums – an indication of the presence of Powerful Owls, as they will frequently leave the tail when feeding.

Then one morning in late February while driving the children to school, I saw the crushed remains of a bird on Haleys Gully Road, Hurstbridge. On the way back I stopped to check what bird it was. Although it was very flattened, I was able to get some wing feathers and thought it looked like the plumage of the Powerful Owl. About a week later I took the feathers to the Healesville Sanctuary and a bird keeper was able to confirm it was a feather from a Powerful Owl. He thought that it would be a usual occurrence for one to be hit by a car. Unfortunately we can only speculate about the circumstances of its death. While it was good to know that they are around Hurstbridge and the district, it was very regrettable that another one of these rare birds had been lost.



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

On Top of Mount Lofty

By Mick Woiwod

The day was just perfect for Bend of Islands Elders Group's June outing. Without a cloud in the sky the ten of us set out with Alan Bonny at the wheel on what was to be our shortest journey yet.

Down to Pound Bend to pick up the key from the Ranger's office then on to Heritage Golf Course for coffee and nibbles.

It's certainly a very different world on the south side of the river. Not a muddie in sight and our own Sanctuary Cove on the Yarra! It's not that the complex is unattractive in its way because it isn't. There's wall-to-wall harmony, appeal even, about its perfectly manicured lawns but it's definitely not Bend of Islands!

I'm told that it's even compulsory to drive a motorised golf-buggy to play a round so as not to slow the pace of those following, and since this removes any real pretence of exercise, golfers need to find that in the resort's up-market gym and indoor pool.

Our next stop was Mount Lofty a mere five minutes away. We were met at the gate by park ranger David van Bockel, who led us up to a viewpoint above the Park's recently completed seven hectare burn.

According to David, the burn has attained its main goals of diminishing Burgan spread and activating the germination of other native species. He went on to explain that it may be some years before a final assessment can be made.

David spent the better part of an hour with our group answering questions and providing us with a splendid dissertation on matters environmental.

It was then time for lunch on Mt Lofty's highest point overlooking Bend of Islands, the river and a large slice of the Yarra Valley. What a view! It was most heart-warming to gaze out as we munched. Southward, the beautiful Yarra Valley, to the east another world's gentrified golf course around our entire north-western vista, Bend of Islands presenting much as it would have a thousand years ago.

After lunch, talk tuned to Mt Lofty's history. With it visible every single day of the year from our own east-facing windows, it had long ranked high among my own pet interests.

Cleared of trees in 1904 it had been sown into pasture for sheep and cattle by Captain A. E. T. Payne (of Payne's Bon Marche stores fame) as part of his model farm, 'River View'. Prior to that, from 1860 onwards, it had formed part of

William 'Bully' Brown's 'Wonga Park Cattle Station'. Bully employed mainly Aboriginal stockmen and, until a bushfire wiped it out, there's been a small fenced in Aboriginal cemetery on the hill's southern slopes. 'The Whiffler', who won the Melbourne Cup of 1867, was the most famous of Bully Brown's mob of Mt Lofty horses.

With regeneration burns, lunch and history behind us we bid farewell to Mt Lofty. Our next stop was Barneong or, as most of us know it today, Brushy Creek for a visit to Buk-ker-til-ibul the dreamtime site that had given Warrandyte its name. After parking the bus at Wittons Reserve we strolled across to a small gorge beside the bridge that straddles the creek to hear its story which runs as follows:

*Long time ago in the Dreamtime, Bunjil the eagle flew over this land and looked down and saw his people doing wrong things. He was angry and flew off to talk with other Dreamtime spirits who, together, had made this land the beautiful place that it is. They talked together into the night and decided the wrongdoers must be punished.**

Bunjil the eagle flew off high into the night sky and reached out to grasp one of his smaller stars which he hurled down to strike those who'd transgressed his lore. After that his people were always careful to remain true to the land.

Warrandyte is said to translate as 'Warren' to throw and 'dyte' the place thrown to. The spot where the star hit in the Dreamtime is today that small gorge in Brushy Creek. Geologically speaking it marks the intersection of the Yarra and Brushy Creek Faults.



***Excerpt from Mick Woiwod, forthcoming Tales of Auld Duncan, due to be launched in September 2006**

This article was first published in The Bend of Islands Newsletter, No 66

Wildlife Rescue

By Julie Pryor

The Koala scene is not good this year, so far 8 koalas have died from this area that I know of. Another koala came into care from another area. The Joey weighed 77grams and he had a few minor injuries, his



mother was hit by a car and killed. He had no fur, only a few whiskers, his eyes were closed, his ears were up and he took to the bottle

beautifully, so we thought he was worth a go. We kept him going for about 36 hours unfortunately it all became too much for him and he died. A post mortem has been done on two of the koalas; one showed thyroid problems, the other showed nothing significant.



A koala came in from Stane Brae Court. Wonga Park. She was euthanased. Her teeth had worn right down and she was unable to eat. I was able to watch the post mortem being done on this animal. She did not have a Joey, she did not have any worms, she had a lot of fluid in her bowel - no great problems there - but a tumor in the lung was of concern. Parts of the spleen, kidney and the tumor have been sent for further testing. No results as yet.

A good place to visit is Healesville Sanctuary's new Vet centre. If the Vets are working, they are on display examining animals, operating on animals and doing post mortems. The Vet staff are always there, but the action only happens when an animal comes in. Visitors can also see animals recovering in rooms around the centre. The Sanctuary looks after their own animals and wildlife which is brought in by the public.

A koala was sighted in Reynolds Road East Doncaster. It was trying to cross the road and almost caused an accident. When I got to it, it was doing what koalas do best. Sleeping high in a gum tree.

People in Plants

By Shelagh Morton

Ferdinand Bauer (1760-1826)

"The supreme botanical draughtsman, the Leonardo of natural history painting" This compliment can be fully appreciated when one looks at "An Exquisite Eye. The Australian Flora and Fauna Drawings 1801-1820 of Ferdinand Bauer". (The catalogue for a superb exhibition held some years ago at the National Botanic Gardens in Canberra)

Bauer was Austrian, and an accomplished, experienced botanical artist working in Oxford when he came to the attention of Sir Joseph Banks who appointed him the natural history painter to the Flinders "Investigator" expedition, by the end of which he had made sketches of more than 1000 plants and two hundred animals.

He worked closely with Robert Brown, collaborating together for months in Sydney after Flinders had left for England. Brown commemorated Bauer by naming *Genoplesium baueri* (a brittle midge orchid seen in Port Jackson in 1805 and painted by Bauer). Thirty nine of the forty *Genoplesium* species are found in Australia. We have *Genoplesium despectus* in Warrandyte and nearby Eltham. There is also *Bauera rubiodes*, *Eucalyptus baueriana*, and close to home *Tetradlea bauerifolia* - Heath Pink Bells.



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

Held on the first Sunday of each month. 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

October 1st: 'Reptile Awareness Display.' The Snake handler Team. Meet at Rangers depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Mel ref 23 C10)

November 5th: 'Birds from River to Ridge.' Ken Harris **Meet:** South end of Pound Bend Picnic area carpark off Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Mel Ref 23 A11)

December 3rd: 'Yarra Brae.' Anthony Owen. **Meet:** Clifford Park Scout Camp, Clifford Drive, Wonga Park (Mel Ref 24 J6)

Thursday Walks 2006

Held on the fourth Thursday of the month at 1.00pm. Meet at the nursery, Pound Bend Rangers depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melways 23 C10). Walks will last approximately 2 hours.

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	9844 4547	
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)

October 4th 'Koorie landscapes'

November 1st 'Indigenous Story'

December 6th 'Bush Heritage Fund'

Beth Gott

Mick Woiwod

Paul Foreman

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).

Thursday September 7th **Planting at Whipstick Gully.** Meet at the depot at 10.00am

Thursday October 5th **Planting at Pound Bend.** Meet at the depot at 10.00am

Thursday November 2nd **Honeysuckle Removal at Norman Reserve.** Meet at the depot at 10.00am

Deadline for October newsletter is October 1st

contributions can be sent to PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113 or

email ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.

TAG Team at Timber

By Pat Coupar

Last month's TAG (Thursday Activity Group) morning was spent at Timber Reserve. Fowspians were once again joined by some of Manningham City Council's local 'Bush Gain' property owners.

Access to the State Park was through a locked gate via a Management Vehicle Only track. We soon left the track and headed downhill into an area where Park staff had carried out an ecological fuel reduction burn.

While the burn had stimulated many indigenous plants to grow, the heat had also germinated hundreds (probably thousands) of introduced Sallow Wattles (*Acacia longifolia*). It was the task of the TAG team to remove these.

Smaller plants were able to be pulled by hand, but the larger ones had to be cut and dabbed with neat Roundup. While it was a somewhat slippery slope, the team did well and within an hour all the 'bad' wattles had gone.

Ranger, David Van Bockel, who organised the activity then led the group on a walk down into the gully and up the other side where he

explained some of the management techniques for the site.

It was most interesting to compare the two sides of the gully. The first area where we had been working was burnt in April 2005 and (apart from the weedy wattles) was regenerating well with a lush ground cover of grasses and wildflowers including Chocolate Lilies, Violets, Running Postman etc.

The other slope was burnt in April this year. David explained that before a burn is carried out a 'drought soil index' is measured. The reading for this year's prescribed burn was twice as high as that of the burn carried out in 2005. The result of the soil being so much drier was that the fire burnt much hotter and the consequence of that was a different pattern of germination following the fire. The hotter burn had stimulated wattles and clover to germinate and provided an ash bed for eucalypts seeds to grow.

It will be most interesting to revisit the site next year to compare the two sides of the gully once again.

The morning was most successful and ended with a delicious lunch organized by Cathy Willis from Manningham Council.



April 2005 Burn Site



April 2006 Burn Site

Worth Repeating

Florida Everglades seeks out help in battle against Australian invader

By Mark Coultan (New York)

Most Australian immigrants are warmly welcomed in the United States. But there is one stubborn Australian visitor that Florida has been trying to get rid of for years, and it has enlisted other Australians in the fight.

Florida's Everglades, which is a World Heritage-listed wetland area, has suffered for a century from the spreading infestation of the Australian *Melaleuca*, or paperbark tree. Introduced first as an ornamental tree, the species spread over 250,000 hectares, taking over grass wetlands and crowding out native species such as the pond apple tree.

Back in the early part of the 20th century, as people began to settle southern Florida, there were attempts to drain the Everglades to provide more land for housing and to get rid of mosquitoes.

John Gifford, the first American to hold a doctorate in forestry, suggested using *Melaleucas* around the edges of the wetland to dry it out in a more environmentally sensitive manner. But it was the wrong tree.

Without any natural enemies, it thrived. For a while it was a popular tree. One nursery owner flew over the Everglades, conducting aerial seeding. He would then come back when the trees were saplings, uproot them and sell them.

The tree has since proven difficult to remove. As a weed alert from the Florida Environmental Protection Department says: "*Melaleuca* can flower five times per year. Any damage to the tree that cuts water flow to the stems containing seed capsules, such as fires, freezes and control techniques, will result in seed release."

The seeds can remain viable for 10 years and a single tree can store up to 20 million of them.

Attempting to kill the trees with herbicide had only limited success. In the past decade, authorities have started to bring the *Melaleuca* under control by introducing Australian insects that feed on the tree.

With the help of the Sydney Botanic Gardens, Allen Dray, an ecologist with the Agricultural Research Service of the US Agriculture Department, studied the genetic origins of the tree in order to find exactly the right biological control agent.



The *Melaleuca* snout weevil was released in 1997 and plant lice were tried in 2002. A small fly nicknamed a 'ferg' is scheduled to be the next weapon released against the *Melaleuca*.

To ensure these insects didn't turn into Florida's version of the cane toad - introduced into Queensland from Hawaii in an unsuccessful attempt to stop a beetle destroying sugar cane crops - the first insect was studied for 11 years before being released into the wild.

The insects have helped Florida reclaim 40,000 hectares, mostly of public land. "It's still a problem, but we are getting ahead of it," Mr Dray says.

Despite common belief, biological agents have proved very successful at controlling exotic weeds. One of the famous examples is the introduction of the *Cactoblastis* caterpillar to Australia, which wiped out massive infestations of prickly pear.

Mr Dray points out that *Melaleuca* is not the only Australian pest. Australian pine, as *Casuarina* is called there, is a problem along the Florida coast.

"Don't feel too guilty," he says. "You're now having a problem with a tree we call pond apple, which is a Florida species, which I understand is taking over areas in North Queensland where *Melaleuca* was."

Source: *The Age* 10/7/06

Walert Creek

The tributary that runs down to the Mullum Creek in the Hillcrest/Petty's Land area has been recently named the Walert Creek. Walert is Aboriginal for possum. After consultation with Wurrundjeri elders, Manningham Council and the Registrar of Geographic names, the creek is no longer just a number on a map. Future park managers, whether it be the City of Manningham or Parks Victoria, will need a comprehensive management plan to rehabilitate the huge weed problems in the area.

The overhead canopy of trees and middle-storey plants make it a very pretty and tranquil spot. It's hard to believe you are in a Melbourne suburb when you sit at the junction of the Walert and Mullum Mullum Creek. The rock formations and rushing waters of the Mullum Mullum after rain, creates a splendid bush landscape. Both of these tributaries to the Yarra River deserve to be taken care of to ensure they remain viable habitat for local wildlife, as well as for downstream and bay creatures.

Source: *Hillcrest Association Newsletter*.

Market Volunteers

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

The trailer was delivered by Fred Rich 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.

Special Event

'Reptile Awareness Display' By The Snakehandler Team

Sunday 1 October

Stacey and Sean McCarthy will give a presentation and live demonstration. Learn about the reasons why reptiles may be in the area, what to do when you see a reptile, prevention of unwanted reptile visitors, and basic snake bite first aid.

Stay for a short walk to revegetation areas nearby and a BYO BBQ lunch in the Folly afterwards.

Meet: Rangers Depot, Pound Bend Road, Warrandyte (Mel Ref 23 C10)



News from the Committee

Nothing to report from the committee this month.

Committee meetings are held at 7.30pm in the meeting room at the Rangers Office, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte. The next meeting is on October 10th

FOWSP AGM will be held on November 12th

All committee meetings are open to any member who wishes to come along.



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Blackbird

(Turdus merula)

The Blackbird was introduced from Europe into Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania in the 1860's. While its range has spread into southern New South Wales, fortunately the preferred habitat of the bird is in towns, gardens and orchards.

Blackbirds will eat snails, slugs and worms, however its food of choice is fruit and because of this blackbirds are responsible for the spread of environmental weeds such as Cotoneaster, Hawthorn and Sweet Pittosporum

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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