

April 2007

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Festival Weekend

By Mike and Pat Coupar

It was good to hear steady rain on the roof on Festival morning. Fortunately for all those involved, it stopped in time for the big parade.

Sunday was much more typical Festival weather with blue skies and sunshine. As usual FOWSP had a good position on the river bank next to the Parks Victoria tent.

Several new members were signed up over the weekend and others took the opportunity to renew their subscriptions. Many thanks to all those members who volunteered their time to look after the FOWSP trailer behind the counter.

Our Rangers put on a great display with a 'wombat information tunnel' for the kids to crawl through. This was very popular and made an interesting change from face painting and badge

making.

Over the two day Festival FOWSP had a grand plant sale down at the nursery.

Despite some great bargains and very healthy plants, sales were somewhat disappointing. But this is probably understandable considering how hot and dry



it has been. However, the sale is still on and plants can be obtained from the FOWSP nursery on Thursdays and the first Sunday of the month (see ad. this newsletter).



Bush Backyard

Time to Stocktake

By Pat Coupar

OK. The long, long, long, hot, dry spring, summer, and autumn is over? At least, I hope so. A few weeks ago I took a monetary bet with husband Mike that there would be no more 30 degree days this season!

So, it was time to take stock and carry out a detailed survey of the garden to see just what had survived best.

By and large the eucalypts – mostly Red Box (*Eucalyptus polyanthemos*) and Long-leaved Box (*Eucalyptus goniocalyx*) - had not suffered unduly and some were even putting on new growth.

During last winter I had severely pruned my large Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*) shrubs that had become unruly – cutting them off about 20 to 30 centimetres from the base. As a result, in spring, the stumps all sprouted new growth. By pruning to keep their shape, the now much smaller Sweet Bursaria shrubs survived the heat well, without water and maintained their healthy bright green foliage.



Other plants that made it through the drought conditions quite well included Gold-dust Wattles (*Acacia acinacea*), Lightwood Wattles (*Acacia implexa*) and most Correas.

Some of those less hardy indigenous plants included Dusty Miller (*Spyridium parvifolium*) and several species of Pomaderris. While many of the grasses looked dead, most have started to green up with the cooler weather and only a little rain.

Native Rosemaries

(*Westringia rosmariniformis*, or *Westringia fruticosa*)

By Steven Katsineris

When we moved into our house in Hurstbridge, there were a lot of large trees in the yard, but there was still plenty of space to plant more vegetation. For that reason I have been slowly planting more trees and shrubs in the garden over the years. The soil in



our yard is poor though, dry and rocky, so I needed very hardy shrubs.

On one occasion when looking for more plants I saw some Native Rosemary seedlings for sale. They sounded quite hardy so I brought four of them. I planted them in the driest parts of the yard, three in full sun and the other one in part shade. I watered them for a while to get them started and then left them. Even in these adverse conditions they thrived, growing dense and are now 1.5 metres high and 2 metres wide.

I was so impressed with this shrub I later brought another six Native Rosemary seedlings. The first lot of Native Rosemary have white flowers, the second group have lilac flowers. I planted all of these in full sun and like the original batch they also flourished and are now over one metre high and one metre wide.

Recently I bought another eight seedlings, five with white flowers and three with lilac flowers. I planted two of these seedlings in part shade, the rest in very sunny positions. I've put them in places where it's difficult to get other things to grow. I was sure these plants would do just fine, however. Within two weeks they were all double their size and had flowers growing on them. Native Rosemary is a very fast growing shrub indeed.

Bush Backyard continued on next page

Bush Backyard continued

The Native Rosemary is a widely cultivated shrub, which is useful for coastal planting, as it will also tolerate salt laden winds. It looks wonderful in with several grown together in mass plantings and can be grown as a hedge in gardens.

In the wild Native Rosemary is found along the coastal areas of southeastern Australia.

Native Rosemary is one of the top Australian plants for attracting native bees. And while bees and butterflies love its flowers, I have many times found stick insects and beetles in its foliage too.

The Native Rosemary is an extremely hardy plant that will tolerate almost any soil and situation. It is drought tolerant, frost resistant and also fire retardant too. An excellent plant for difficult conditions, it needs little water, is hardy, reliable and flowers over a long period. What more could a gardener desire in a plant.

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

Blitz on Dunnart Backyards

Report by Joan Broadberry

In March I went with some of the Thursday nursery crew to a location in Christmas Hills to check out dunnart habitat. It turned out to be a very special morning.

As FOWSP treasurer, I knew that we had recently allocated funds to erect a dunnart fence. But what exactly is that? Somehow the details of the project had passed me by. It seemed like a good idea to get involved. After rendezvousing near the site, our group of about ten walked the last few hundred meters. Some folk were plucking handfuls of dry tussock grass to take with them. I wondered what it was for.

Cam Beardsell is masterminding the dunnart conservation project and he soon filled us in. The fence was built to protect the vegetation by excluding grazing animals. It also plays a role in discouraging foxes, but it is not fox proof. The dunnarts, being very small, can easily move in and out of the fenced area. Inside the compound Cam has designed and constructed twenty artificial dunnart burrows. These consist of a shallow cavity filled with small stones, protected by a concrete paver. Dry tussock grass is placed on top of the stones to provide nesting material. Our job was to finish off the burrows by adding a back panel to make them waterproof.

Cam demonstrated the work needed on an empty burrow, and then moved onto a second to reinforce the lesson. When he lifted the paver, to his great surprise and delight, it was occupied by a tiny mouse-like creature. Cam caught it gently, and we

all had our first look at a Common Dunnart in the wild. The Common Dunnart (*Sminthopsis murina*) is a nocturnal marsupial, grey with white underparts and feet. It is smaller than a house mouse with large rounded ears and a pointy snout. Dunnarts are insectivorous, feeding on beetles, insect larvae and spiders. They are nocturnal and their natural burrow is a cup shaped nest of dry grass and leaves inside a fallen hollow log.



As the creature needed to get back to its home ASAP, willing hands modified the burrow at top speed – hence my title. A short time later two more dunnarts were found to be in residence. More excitement and speedy work on their backyards. You could not wipe the smile off Cam's face. Such success is a remarkable achievement and our congratulations must go to him. In fact even Cam himself did not expect the burrows to be occupied so quickly.

Cam and his helpers will continue to monitor the dunnarts during the coming breeding season. Two litters are normally born between August and March. Litters are up to 10 young, so the species has a high reproductive rate and could be expected to thrive. However, predators especially foxes will need to be continually controlled.

A Dream Come True

By Peggy Safstrom

“ Ahhh, that feels good! There's a quiet sense of achievement when you've been able to construct something from what you have salvaged and stacked away for a rainy day. The 'in' word - recycling.

We've just created a shadehouse. We wouldn't have needed it, if the skies had produced rain. I had trays of grasses, Wallaby and Danthonia, as well as trays of Dichondra, all set to be planted in spring. But I waited for the rain - and waited - and waited. The trays sat up on two parallel benches. But then, I needed to shelter them from the HEAT.

So we checked around the backs of the dry sheds etc. for those 'rainy' day items and found just what we needed for a skeletal framework. Six star stakes were driven into the hard soil, three each end. Then, treated pine poles bolted to the stakes, the centre ones higher. Four poles from an old heavy canvas tent worked well for stays. We unearthed some pieces of not quite matching timber with rotten ends. When neatened off and split in half, they just made the distance along the sides. So we finished up with a nice 'A' framework. It was all together!

We sped off to the Hardware shop. (Isn't it sad that Warrandyte has lost its Hardware!) One length of 70% shadecloth went up and over and down, secured by a few tent pegs, and the job was

done. A tank sits nearby, which still has plenty of water collected from the shed roof over winter, with a gravity fed hose. I can tell you, I am in my element, tracking down to my shadehouse each day to lightly water and check up on my plants.

I've walked New Zealand's Milford Track and delighted in its soul inspiring beauty. But that was a One Off. This is my DAILY delight!

I'd had secret hopes, that the temporary shed, put together the day we shifted, to house two benches and stacks of tools etc, until the large workshop was built, would eventually be mine to use for plants. It faced North. It had an open front and louvre windows at the sides. Perfect! But no, it found another use.

It houses memorabilia! MOST important stuff. Amongst other items, there are a collection of named bird's eggs, gathered in the 1930's on the way to or from Deepdene Primary; various unnamed birds' nests; an old saddle, hanging by one spring; many small tobacco-tins filled with absolutely nothing; two large tins, one holding a dozen or so padlocks without keys, and the other, more like four dozen keys, unrelated to anything; various scales, table and hanging, with their respective non-metric weights; a boomerang; a china shaving cup; a chain with handle, also china, from an old cistern; a 'dog' or two from the old Ghan railway line; a rusted brace without a bit; and a lead-wiped plumbing joint, Oh yes, and dear Grandma's mangle. But who cares about that shed? I have my SHADEHOUSE!

Shelf Life



These photos of Peron's Tree Frog (*Litoria peronii*) were taken by FOWSP member Lynda Rogan who discovered the frog behind the coffee jars on a shelf at the nursery. She observed that it was darkish brown when first seen against the wooden cupboard surface, but later its colour became much lighter as it moved against a white cutting board.

FOWSP Committee 2007

Joan Broadberry	9846 1218	Treasurer	
Pat Coupar	9844 1650	Newsletter Editor	
Joan MacMahon	9844 3213		
Peter Curry	9844 0958		<u>Nursery Manager</u> 0408317327
Mike Coupar	9844 1650		
Karen Reynolds	9712 0797		<u>Park Office</u> 9844 2659
Martyn Hiley	9844 4547		<u>Wildlife Rescue</u> Adriana Simmonds
Artur Muchow	0415383328		<u>Koala Rescue</u> Julie Pryor 9722 1117
Gray Ardern			
Winsome Coutts			<u>Market</u> Marie Krause 9712 0498

Thursday Activity Group (TAG)

The Thursday Activity Group will continue next year with a new program of activities, co-ordinated by Ranger Jodie Godfrey and FOWSP member Joan MacMahon

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).

May 3 rd	Woody weed control at Timber Reserve
June 7 th	Boy's Road planting
July 5 th	Pound Bend. Chilean site recovery planting

For more information contact either Jodie on 9844 2659 or Joan on 9844 3213

Manningham City Council Environment Seminars 2006

Held on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm at South Warrandyte Hall, 66-68 Hall Rd, Sth Warrandyte (Mel ref. 35 J8) **The seminars are FREE. No bookings required**



Wednesday May 2 Craig Cleeland "FROGS"

Craig's talk will introduce the Frogs of Melbourne with some general and ecological considerations when designing frog friendly breeding sites; along with a more general overview of threatening process and frog conservation. A detailed overview of the Southern Toadlet, a once wide spread species to the north and east of Melbourne will compare surveys completed in the late '60's/early 70's with the results of a 2007 survey with a view to nominating this species under the Fauna and Flora Guarantee Act.

Currently a teacher at Aquinas College, Craig is a long time advocate for frog conservation having been involved in numerous national conservation/education initiatives and on the founding committee for the Frogs Australia Network. He wrote and produced the "Frogs of Melbourne" booklet and his photographs and sound recordings have been used in numerous publications and web sites.

June 6th Murray Bouchier "VICTORIA'S DRY COUNTRY"

July 4th Sarah Bekessy "EXTINCTION IN THE SUBURBS"

August 1st Alan Webster "BIODIVERSITY TRENDS IN THE YARRA CATCHMENT "

Deadline for May newsletter is April 29th

contributions can be sent to **PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113** or
email ian.coupar@vcp.monash.edu.

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

Non-members \$1.20



Attention all Members

Would all members who have obtained plants from the FOWSP nursery please make sure they return the empty forestry tubes and more importantly the black plastic tube holder trays. These trays are specially made and have been bought by FOWSP at considerable cost. We cannot possibly keep track of where they all go, but many are not coming back. So would all members, particularly who put in large orders last year of several hundred plants, have a look round to see if they still have our plastic trays somewhere. They can be returned to the nursery any weekday between 8.00am and 5.00pm or on the first Sunday of the month between 2.00pm and 4.00pm.

Sunday Walks 2007

Walks are 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

6th May Water and Fire

Nigel Philpot and Dave Van Bockel

Nigel is Environmental Education Officer for MCC, Dave is a Parks Victoria Ranger. Nigel will test the water quality in the river at our start point, the top of the Warrandyte Gorge, and in several spots along the way. Dave will meet us to tell the story of two very different controlled burns in recent years and show us the results.

Time: approx 4 hours BYO lunch. **Distance:** approx 5 kms

Meet: Wittons Reserve, Reserve Road, Wonga Park (Melways 24 K6) to car pool to Lower Homestead Road.

3rd June Main Yarra Trail and Beyond
July 1 Little Bolin

Ant Owen
Andre Messina and Helen Tuton

Thursday Walks 2007

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

Sagittaria

By Pat Coupar

For the last 20 years – give or take a few – we have had a camping weekend up at the Murray River in spring and again in late summer or autumn. We have seen floods and droughts and everything in between.

Our favourite location is the Barmah State Park where there are several broad sandy beaches to swim from and backwater billabongs to explore. The birdlife is always prolific and koalas, kangaroos and snakes are plentiful.

We were not surprised, on this most recent visit, to see many of the River Red Gums looking rather sick. Most were stressed and had dropped leaves and limbs. However, the mistletoes (Creeping and Drooping) that adorned many of trees, were thriving.

The water level was low, but not as low as we had expected, and the current was quite strong. In the riparian strip, close to the river the river Red gums looked much healthier than those in the forest away from the water.

Other species doing well were the Silver Wattles – adults and seedlings – and small ground covers like Knotweed (*Persicaria prostrata*). In addition, there were some plants growing in the sand at the edge of the water that I had never seen before. Starting out as a tuft of short strappy basal leaves submerged in water, the fleshy bright green plant produced tall stems as it emerged.

Later, when we went for a drive to the channels and backwaters, we saw the plant again. This time en masse. I had my suspicions when I first saw it that this was a weed and it was now conforming to typical weed

behaviour – quick growing, opportunistic, invasive and out competing natives.

The plant (as I identified later) is called Sagittaria (*Sagittaria graminea*), it belongs to the family Alismataceae, the same family as our local native Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*). In fact the plants look somewhat alike with upright tufts of broad, spear-like leaves. However, the leaves of Water Plantain are broader and its flowers are small and produced in an open head, while Sagittaria's flowers are larger and more compact.

Although, I admit, I may have overlooked the occasional plant before, in all the years that we have visited this part of the Murray we have never seen an infestation such as this, and on such a scale. Not only was the plant growing in the drying mud of billabongs, it had also taken advantage of the broad slow-flowing bends of the river. Growing from rhizomes, Sagittaria was practically spreading before our



eyes with plants in all stages of development.

According to the 'Flora of Victoria' (vol 2), Sagittaria "*Occurs in drainage and irrigation channels between Nathalia and Yarrawonga*".

It is recognised as a pest plant in the Goulburn/Shepparton irrigation area where it can block channels. Could this drawn out drought be the trigger for this water weed to really take off along the Murray and spread further downstream? We will probably find out on our next visit to the Barmah State Park in spring.



People in Plants

By Shelagh Morton

Pultenaea gunnii Golden Bush Pea

I read that a biography of Linneus was written in the 19th Century by R. Pulteney. As a result a delightful plant of the pea family is named for him. However, it is the *gunnii* part of the equation that I am interested in.

Ronald Gunn was of Scottish parents and as a young man sailed for Tasmania in 1830 to eventually become an important public servant, serving as a police magistrate, private secretary to the Governor, Sir John Franklin, and a wide variety of other government positions.

In addition to leading this busy public life Gunn was an energetic traveller and botanist. He



became a plant collector for Professor William Hooker of Glasgow University. This contact with Hooker was maintained through the latter's son Joseph Dalton Hooker who was the botanist for the 1840 Antarctic expedition led by James Ross. While the "Erebus" was based in Hobart Gunn was able to introduce Hooker to the local flora.

Like many of the botanists I have written about Gunn was a Fellow of the Linnean Society, and the Royal Society in London and he wrote copiously in journals of science and botany.

I have a pot of flourishing *Desmodium gunnii* (Slender Tick-trefoil) on my kitchen table, so am reminded of Ronald Gunn as I admire the exquisite, tiny pink pea flowers.



New records for Warrandyte

By Pat Coupar

Recently there have been a couple of interesting discoveries made at Warrandyte. One is a variety of *Correa reflexa* (Common Correa) known as *Correa reflexa* var. *lobata*. This variety is endemic to Victoria - that is, its natural distribution is restricted to the State of Victoria.

Previously this variety has been recorded from heathy open forest in an area east of Melbourne, from the Dandenong Ranges to Powelltown, with an isolated occurrence at Cranbourne.

Correa reflexa var. *lobata* is a green-flowered variety of Correa that can be identified by its square, deeply lobed calyx with distinctive triangular lobes.

Botanist, Geoff Carr, will be visiting Warrandyte soon to look at the Correa with a view to possibly making it a separate species.

The other recent discovery is *Senecio odoratus* (Scented Groundsel) a member of the daisy family.

While we have a number of common Senecios in Warrandyte - some particularly good at colonising disturbed areas - the Scented Senecio is rare in the local area.

Senecio odoratus is one of the more attractive species of Groundsel. It has a bushy appearance with large, somewhat fleshy, grey-green leaves. Large flat-top clusters of yellow flowers can remain on the plant for some time and unlike many Groundsels this species does not die back after flowering.

Normally found in coastal regions from South Australia to Lakes Entrance, isolated populations have been recorded from the Grampians, Bacchus Marsh and the Lysterfield area.

This recent discovery in Warrandyte is another interesting disjunct occurrence and, because there are so few plants, is extremely vulnerable. Fortunately the plant is now being grown by FOWSP at the nursery and next year will be planted back in secure locations in the State Park.



Festival Volunteers

A big thank you to the following people who volunteered their time on the FOWSP trailer during the two day Warrandyte Festival:

Ray Kruger, Anne Warren, Jan Smids, Jan Tindale, Diane Baird, Joan MacMahon, Alison Thom, Peter Curry, Lyn Douch, Marie Krause, Antje Bauer, Mark Hassell, Margaret Hassell, Tony Honeybourne, Adrienne Hilton, Julie Bishop, Wolfgang Krause and Marjan Kiewert.

The trailer was delivered by Warrandyte State Park staff and returned to the depot by Wolfgang Krause. The trailer will not be at the April market.

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.

Gigantic Plant Sale

Where: FOWSP nursery at the Warrandyte State Park depot, Pound Bend Rd, Warrandyte (Melway 23 C10),

When: Thursday 9.30am to 12.30pm and the first Sunday of the month 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

Forestry Tubes only 60 cent including:

All eucalypts

Variety of wattles

Bulbine Lily (*Bulbine bulbosa*)

Drooping she-oak (*Allocasuarina litoralis*)

Dusty Miller (*Spyridium parvifolium*)

Velvet Tussock Grass (*Poa morrissii*)

Ferns

Forestry Tubes \$2.50

6 inch pots \$5.00

Grass Trees

6 inch pots \$10.00

Orchids \$5.00

Variety of other plants in 6 inch pots \$5.00



If you have been down to the nursery recently you may have noticed that the house that stood on the corner of the Rangers Office entrance road, has gone.



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Friends of Warrandyte State Park
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Warrandyte, 3113



European Wasp
(*Vespula germanica*)

They're back again, spoiling our picnic lunches and barbeques. A fairly recent invader, European wasps were not recorded in Australia until 1977. While most colonies in the northern hemisphere die off in winter, ours just keeps growing and expanding its distribution.

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

FOWSP Membership Renewal Form

Name

Address

.....

Tel. no.

Email.....

Membership \$20
Concession \$10

Send to: FOWSP PO Box 220, Warrandyte 3113

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