

May 2007

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

Around the Park

By Mike Coupar

Time for another look at our Warrandyte State Park Reserves.

Firstly to Pound Bend. How nice it was to see this idyllic setting being used for a wedding and that the guests can stay as long as they liked without fear of the gates being closed!

There is a new metal sign at the entrance announcing Pound Bend Reserve. I was pleased to see the new signage and especially to notice that the 'gate closure' signs had been removed. The trial to leave the gates open is obviously finished and they will now only be closed on days of total fire ban.

Further down the entrance road on the right hand side there is a new sign welcoming visitors to Wurundjeri Country and acknowledging the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of what is now Warrandyte State Park. This is a great move.



The Parks other major visitor centre, Jumping Creek Reserve also has a new sign at its entrance and the old gate closure sign has been taken away.



Further upstream at Mount Lofty Reserve I only went as far as the car park where I noticed a new canoe ramp sign with information on river levels and safety. Unfortunately this car parking area is still being used as rubbish dump. I saw one large old fridge and many bottles scattered over the ground and on the picnic table.

On the other side of the river at Koornong Reserve, I was pleased to see that a 'no fires' sign had been erected. Hopefully this will discourage visitors from having camp fires beside the river as this has been a problem in the past.

Last year (October 2006), on this page, I did a survey of the Park Reserves and gave a star rating according to their facilities and signage etc. While I haven't revisited all the reserves, I'm pleased to report that Pound Bend in particular has increased its rating.

I will update you on some of the other Reserves in a few months time.

Bush Backyard

Stranded in a Big Backyard

By Olive Walters

My backyard right now is a big backyard extending from Melbourne (which we left on the 22nd of March) to Kununurra on the 1st of April.

We've had a few experiences we weren't expecting such as being drenched in a downpour by the time the van was up in Port Augusta to putting the van down in rain in Alice Springs where there is water in the Todd River.

We were also stranded for almost 3 hours by water over a floodway. Now we are stranded because the road is closed between Hall's Creek and Fitzroy Crossing and we dare not move on until at least the trucks and 4WD's are being allowed through.

In spite of all that it's a great backyard – so green with water in evidence all the way up the Stuart Highway albeit a little too much along the Victoria Highway.

I'm now seeing some amazing birdlife such as Crimson, Star and Long-tailed Finches, Yellow Orioles, Blue-winged Kookaburra, Red-backed Kingfisher, Jacana and Brolga – birds I haven't seen for nearly seven years.

This caravan park is not four star but it has some interesting wildlife such as the large skink that suns itself on a favourite rail and the monitor (a brown one) that waddles through the campsite each day.



I hope to tell you more about my backyard if we ever get through the Fitzroy catchment area and on to Broome to “Wave the Waders Goodbye”.

Common Correa

By Steven Katsineris

When we moved into our house in Hurstbridge the yard had over twenty large trees, mostly Eucalypts, but there were hardly any shrubs.

I wanted to enhance the garden by increasing the variety of understorey vegetation and make it a thicker, more shaded and lush place. But the soil in Hurstbridge is very dry and rocky and I thought that any shrubs would need to be very hardy. I also wanted plants that require little or no maintenance, have low water requirements and can provide food and habitat for native wildlife in the local area.

When I discovered there was a local form of *Correa reflexa* (Common Correa), a very hardy flowering shrub that I am fond of, I bought three and planted one in a partly shady spot and the other two in very sunny positions. They did so well that I planted three more *Correa reflexa* in various places. They also thrived and all are now over 1.5 metres high and 1.5 metres wide.

Correa reflexa is an attractive upright to spreading medium shrub with bell shaped flowers. It is the most variable Correa, occurring in many different forms. Flowering time is throughout the year, but generally in winter/spring. The flowers produce nectar and attract nectar-eating birds.

While its preferred aspect is dry shady positions under trees, it grows well in part shade and in sunny situations. To reach its full potential, a light sandy soil, semi shade and good drainage is best. For healthy growth and good flowering some watering is advisable. It is important to try to plant the local, distinct form of *Correa reflexa* for your region, as these are best suited to the local climatic conditions.

Correa reflexa is one of my favourite plants as it is easily grown, grows well in practically any type of soil, tolerates dryness, is free of pests and diseases, is long flowering, flowers well and is bird attracting. From my experience I would highly recommend this as an excellent, resilient and beautiful plant for the garden.

The Correa was named after Jose Francisco Correa de Serra, a Portuguese botanist, *reflexa* meaning turned backwards, because the tips of the petals are turned back.

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

Mullum Mullum Corridor Walk

By Grey Ardern

On the first Sunday in March two officers from City of Manningham Environmental Services - Graeme Lorimer (ecologist) and Scott Baker (zoologist) led an intensely interesting ramble along part of the creek valley.

Our first stop (of a great many) was on Macintyre's Road, where Graeme introduced the distinction between plants that are 'tolerators' versus those that are 'competitors'. The tolerators include the hardy indigenous plants which have evolved to survive on the poor soils from the weathering of the local Silurian sediments (our very old rocks), whereas the competitors include exotic plants (weeds) which are able to take advantage of nutrients provided by human activity.

In this instance Graeme predicted that additional nutrients, particularly potassium, would be released from the crushed granite which had been spread on the road - to the benefit of the weeds, and thus to the detriment of the indigenous plants. The phenomenon has been demonstrated

on other sites for decades.

Another way that human activity favours the competitors was pointed out - in the absence of the periodic fires that once



occurred, *Pittosporum undulatum* (Sweet Pittosporum) has successfully invaded the valley. Did you know that foxes eat Pittosporum fruits,

thus spreading the seeds?

We actually managed to take a couple of steps before we came to the boundary between Grassy Dry Forest - containing *Eucalyptus macrorhyncha* (Red Stringybark) and *E. goniocalyx* (misleadingly called Long-leaf Box) and, on the lower side of the boundary, Valley Grassy Forest - containing the vulnerable *E. radiata* (Narrow-leaf Peppermint) and *E. rubida* (Candlebark).

To the relief of the restless there was then a short walk to Steve Mathew's property, which through much hard work has retained remarkably undamaged Valley Grassy Forest - the typical 'Heidelberg School' landscape. One unusual threat is the population of about 40 eastern grey kangaroos, which tends to denude patches, thus favouring *Ehrharta* spp. (veldt-grasses) which are 'competitors', over, for example, *Schoenus apogon* (an indigenous sedge) which is a 'survivor'. *Ehrharta*, furthermore, is immune to the plant-suppressing compounds secreted by *Exocarpus cupressiformis* (Cherry Ballart) so it has been able to colonise the normally bare areas beneath the Cherry Ballarts.

After crossing Tindals Road we had a close look at *Amyema pendulum* (Drooping Mistletoe) and *Amyema quandang* (Grey Mistletoe) which parasitises wattles. At this point came the highlight of the walk: during an account of how mistletoe birds spread the seed of the mistletoe, Graeme did the Dance of the Mistletoe Bird!

Within Currawong Park Scott gave us a concise dissertation on the local birds, whereupon a rufous fantail - a significant sighting - obligingly hove into view.

I have pages more of notes I took during the remainder of the walk, but I've hogged more than my share of the Newsletter already.

Thanks Graeme, Scott, Steve and Cathy.

Worth Repeating

MUSEUM

Spiderlings arrive

A TIGER huntsman at the Melbourne Museum, which is believed to be a new species, has given birth this week to up to 60 spiderlings.

Museum staff say they are ecstatic about the most recent additions to their exhibit family, and are looking forward to watching them grow.

Live exhibits manager Luke Simpkin said it would be particularly interesting to observe the male spider.

The distinctive spider, named for its orange and black markings, was found by museum staff on a collecting trip to north Queensland.

Source: the Age 3/5/07

People in Plants

By Shelagh Morton

Muellerina eucalyptoides
(Creeping Mistletoe)



Baron Ferdinand von Mueller is remembered in the main for his inspired directorship of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, but his energy and zeal was evident in his widespread interest in botany, philosophy, exploration and science.

He had completed a pharmacy qualification in his native Germany before coming to South Australia in 1847 and then to Melbourne where

Governor Latrobe appointed him the government botanist in 1853. While occupying this position he travelled widely in Victoria collecting specimens of half the indigenous vegetation of the State.

Dr von Mueller was interested in the medicinal value of plants and warned of indiscriminate clearing of the land and forests. We use Bosistos Eucalyptus oil widely today. It was von Mueller who encouraged Joseph Bosisto to distil eucalyptus oil commercially in 1853.

As official botanist he accompanied Augustus Gregory on his Exploring Expedition to Northern Australia in 1855, observing nearly 2000 species many new to Australian botany.

Von Mueller arranged for *Eucalyptus globulus* (Southern Blue Gum) to be planted in the swamps of Rome and was appointed a Papal Knight in recognition of his effort. He was a prodigious writer and published over 800 papers and major works on Australian botany.

We have a strong local connection with von Mueller. There is a plaque on the Kauri pine (*Agathis robusta*) he planted in the Lowestoft garden of his friend Joseph Lowe in the 1880s while giving advice on the design of the garden.

There is *Callitriche Muelleri* (Round Starwort), a boggy plant for your ponds, and the rare, pretty *Vittadinia muelleri* (New Holland Daisy) to remember him by, as well as the mistletoe with the attractive flower.

News from the Committee

Rangers Report:

There was no Rangers Report as all the Park Staff were out on Fire patrol for burn-offs.

Nursery Report:

- Plants are now being hand-watered from the rainwater tank.
- Manningham council wished to purchase some Moss and Liverwort brochures, Josh will obtain the price from Joan.
- Plants sale was reasonably successful (considering the drought). Sale prices will continue. Next year intend to promote the Sale extensively through the local schools.
- Plants trailer – next year intend to have the trailer in the Festival Grand Parade.
- Commonwealth Grant for Boys Road. Work will commence 12th April with the first weeding program. Josh will organise a Warrandyte school group to participate in this project.
- Some tools have been purchased for the TAG group.

Other Business:.

Discussion on the 25th Anniversary celebration of FOWSP

Aim:

- To celebrate and mark our 25 years of service to the park.
- To attract more members.
- To highlight the activities of FOWSP.
- To acknowledge some of the people involved and what their contributions have been.
- To highlight some of the major achievements over the 25 years.

After the Fire

By Pat Coupar

Over the Easter break we headed up to a little known reserve in the vicinity of the Avon River in Gippsland. We usually go there at this time of year to escape the crowds. We camp on our own in a bushland setting not far from the river.

The 57,000 hectare reserve consists of rocky escarpments, scenic sandstone gorges, deep valleys and slopes of predominantly open box-ironbark forest.

This year, however, we went with some trepidation for the reserve is situated right at the southern edge of the recent massive bushfire known as the 2006-2007 Great Divide Complex. If the area hadn't been burnt in the bushfire itself, it would certainly have been back burnt from where it abuts private farmland. And that proved to be the case. Although, we couldn't tell which bits had been burnt by the bushfire and which were the result of the back burn.

The amount of forest burnt and the intensity of the fire was patchy on both sides of the river. In some areas total canopy was lost, in others just the understorey had been consumed by the fire. Surprisingly, in both areas the regeneration on the ground was much the same. And it was inspiring and exciting.

I spent much of our three days up there walking around the blackened bush with head down, eyes scanning the cindered ground. It was only April – less than two months since the fire had finally been extinguished – and yes there had been some rain, but the new growth was astounding.

All the eucalypts were sporting shaggy new coats up their trunks and along their branches, in the form of bundles of bright green (and in some cases brilliant bronze or deep crimson) leaves.

In this dry stony forest the understorey, or rather groundstorey is dominated by a robust lily called *Stypandra glauca* (Nodding Blue Lily). These had all regrown from short tufted rhizomes. In addition, I found hundreds of seedlings had germinated around many of the plants. This is interesting because, despite heat treatment, smoke water and everything else, I have never been able to propagate this attractive, highly desirable lily.

Many of the usual post-fire germinants were up and growing lustily, like *Hardenbergia violacea* (Purple Coral-pea), wattles – mostly Sunshine (*Acacia terminalis*) – hakeas and of course orchids. While it is still a bit early for many species, several advanced greenhoods already had a flower bud which really stirred the imagination as to identification!

Getting a head start on all others was the Bottle Daisy (*Lagenifera gracilis*), not only had its dark green rosette of leaves given rise to small purplish flowers born on wiry stalks, but many of the flowers had already set seed.

Microlaena stipoides (Weeping Grass) is a great native grass – one of the best, but its form and growth habit is so variable it has me perplexed. And there was no better example of this than here in this post-burn ash bed. Growing side by side were plants with broad, flat, bluish, ground-hugging leaves and others more upright with bright green, narrow leaves – only the tall wispy ones had developed the arching flowering stems typical of this grass. Without the flowers, this variability in appearance can make identification somewhat difficult – the broader version does resemble introduced Couch grass in some instances.

Regardless of the *Microlaena* conundrum, it was great to see so much natural regeneration so soon after the bushfire. I can't wait to return in Spring.



Worth Repeating

Dam Dwellers plug into the yabby net

By Chee Chee Leung
Science Reporter

Yabbies might be simple creatures with brains the size of peas, but research shows they can tune in to electrical signals under water.

This ability, described as “connecting to underwater broadband”, helps the Australian freshwater crayfish detect when prey, predators or potential mates are nearby.

“The water carries the signals like a wire to your computer, and then the yabby taps into that information and ... knows there’s something out there”, said University of Melbourne marine biologist Blair Patullo.

“The fact that the yabby, a very simple creature, has this ability that rivals that of the sophisticated shark or the stingray is quite amazing and could be giving it the edge that it needs to survive.”

Mr Patullo, of the university’s zoology department, led a five year study under the supervision of zoologist Professor David Macmillan.

The project involved a small team of researchers and hundreds of Australian yabbies, known in the scientific world as *Cherax destructor*.

The team played recorded electrical signals



produced by prey - such as tadpoles - predatory fish, and a fellow yabby, to the yabbies under observation.

When the electrical signals were turned on, the yabbies changed their behaviour by moving their claws or stopping and turning towards the signal.

“It’s a bit of an eat-or-get-eaten world out there, and this sense could help it to find food, to find a mate and reproduce, or also just to escape their predators, like the big Murray cod and the platypus,” Mr Patullo said.

But he said this “sixth sense”, or electroreception, could not protect the yabby from one of its biggest predators - humans dangling bait on a string.

The research was published in the international *Current Biology* journal this month.

Mr Patullo said the findings may help in the management and preservation of yabbies, and the team hopes to broaden the study to include other species, such as lobsters, crabs and prawns.

Source: *The Age* 21/2/07

Tip of the Month

Pull out Bluebell Creeper and Replace with Indigees

Bluebell Creeper (*Sollya heterophylla*) is a native of Western Australia that has become a troublesome weed in the South Eastern States of Australia. It is a dense scrambling climber that belongs to the same family as another weedy native – Sweet Pittosporum (*Pittosporum undulatum*). Like Pittosporum, its seeds are spread by birds and foxes that eat the succulent berries which are produced in late summer and autumn. Older plants can become quite large and woody and will smother shrubs and small trees.

Unfortunately this attractive intruder, with its bright blue flowers and dangling purple berries, is a popular garden plant and is still sold in nurseries.

Plants can be hand pulled or dug out, or larger plants can be cut and dabbed with neat Roundup. Gloves should be worn when handling this plant as its leaves and stems contain toxins that can cause skin irritation and nausea.

When not in flower or fruit and particularly when young, Bluebell Creeper can be confused with the Common Apple-berriy (*Billardiera scandens*). This indigenous twining plant is generally more slender and produces pale yellowish-green bell-shaped flowers followed by oval bright green berries. Apple-berries make a good alternative to the noxious Bluebell Creeper.

"I SPY"

By B.G

Autumn Assembly

A small group of ten Friends headed to Norman Reserve to remove Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* sp.). They were led by Joan Macmahon.

Ranger Relocates

Lauren Dodd left the Park in March to take up a job with DSE at Ballarat.

Anderson Association

Robyn Gillespie (ph 9844 4550) is president of Anderson Creek Catchment Association (ACCA) and is keen to hear from people who may be interested in helping. For more information try tinwarri@hotmail.com.

Future FOWSP?

Catherine Thomas, 12 y.o, of Eltham High turned up with Sheryn Thomas to acquire plants at the nursery Brian James, as well as being seen helping at the nursery. They were also accompanied by Leigh Thomas, 11 y.o, and Sarah Thomas 8 y.o, both from Kangaroo Ground Primary School.

Ryan Crook, 7 y.o from Bentleigh West was present at the nursery with Grandpa Ken Crook, helping with pricking out plants and tube arrangement.

Kai Wood, 3 y.o, was seen with his sister Zoe and mother Jodi obtaining seedlings at the nursery.

Tree Tale

In the April school holidays Nick Lyell was spied accompanying Alwynne Buntine at the depot. Nick has a fractured right elbow – he fell out of a tree. By the way Alwynne as just come a grandmother for the first time – a grandson Thomas.

Ecuador Environmental

Nick was helping Belinda Christie prick out *Einadia nutans*. Belinda has just been in Ecuador for three months doing voluntary environmental work with 'Jatun Sacha' (which means Big Forest).

She is currently in the second year of Bachelor of Environmental Science at the Burwood campus of Deakin University, Belinda learnt Spanish at the C.A.E (in Melbourne).



Son Scene

Justin Welander, ranger, is the proud father of a new boy on the scene, Ashley, born on 1st march. Congratulations to mother Sarah and Justin. (Justin has now been at the Park for ten years).

Apron Array

FOWSP aprons, forest green in colour with an ample pouch at the front, sporting the FOWSP logo with either Correa, Yellow Box or Golden Wattle decoration, have been made available by Jan Tindale and produced by Anne Jackson.

Festival Friend

Tony Oliver signed up to the Friends at the festival. Tony has since helped pricking out Lomandra (ex Pound Bend) and was also seen enjoying a BBQ at Pound Bend with a large group of volunteers, Manningham Council people and I Spy – all after a mornings activity in the Pound Bend area.

Sundry Snippets

Steve Reynolds was very busy photographing people at the depot late April.

Marion King has just had another great grandchild – a boy.

Belinda Christie may be giving a talk at the Deep Creek Uniting Church, about June 12th, on her experiences.

The aim of the ACCA (see earlier) is to increase the amount of natural flora and fauna and improve the water quality in the Anderson Creek Catchment.

Fire Fighting

The Park Project Fire Fighters team has been involved in a large burn at Healesville and also a burn at Powelltown.

Cypriot Connection

Some people may wonder about the writer of frequent pieces in the FOWSP newsletter, Steven Katsineris. One of my super 'spys' found a letter in the Age 31/3/07 where Steven writes "*that one of the most important things in life is to feel a genuine sense of identity, and it is the knowledge that you belong to a place that truly gives us that.*"

Steven lived in Tasmania during the Lake Pedder campaign and now lives in Hurstbridge. I Spy hopes to properly interview Steven one day.



Print
Post

346802/0005

Postage
Paid
Australia

REGISTRATION BY AUSTRALIA POST

PP 346802 / 0005

If undeliverable please return to
Friends of Warrandyte State Park Inc.
P.O. Box 220
Warrandyte, 3113



Eastern Spinebill

(*Acanthorhynchus tenuirostris*)

If you are lucky you might catch a glimpse of this pretty little honeyeater as it probes the native flowers for nectar with its long curved bill. Favourite flowers are grevilleas, banksias and the local *Correa* species and Common Heath.

The Eastern Spinebill is one of the commonest honeyeaters occurring all the way up the east coast of Australia.

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