

August/September 2007

Friends of Warrandyte State Park



Newsletter

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

More Rangers Please!

By Mike Coupar

After reading a letter in the Warrandyte Diary (July 2007) about damage caused by car drivers to the grassy picnic area at Pound Bend, I thought it was time for another round of Park Watch visits.

On past experience I always go with mixed feelings, never quite knowing whether the good will out way the bad. On this occasion I wish I hadn't gone.

First I checked out Pound Bend Reserve. While it was great to see all the recent planting by FOWSP bordering the car park (see photo), the picnic area was a mess. Already stressed by the drought and severe rabbit grazing, there were indeed tracks where people had been driving their cars round and around. However, much worse was to come.



What was to be a pleasant winter's walk on Fourth Hill, rapidly turned into a nightmare. No more than a 100 metres or so along the management track from the end of Tunnel Street I made a shocking discovery. What had been a trackless mossy, orchid-rich hillside was now scared by an extensive system of mountain bike tracks. The makers of these tracks had removed vegetation (uprooted and cut), laid logs for jumps and ramps, excavated soil and rock to camber bends and erected long lengths of tape to mark



out the course. To me, this had all the hallmarks of an organised event.

The track descended from the summit through some of the steepest sections of Fourth Hill. Yesterday's steady rain had further eroded the track leaving it a slippery, muddy mess. In addition, there were plastic drink bottles and other rubbish strewn beside this new track. The section of track I was following came out near the entrance to Geraghty's Mine. It appears that this new track is an expansion of a previous mountain bike circuit on which we reported a few years ago.

Enough was enough! I decided to move on to Jumping Creek Reserve where it was good to see shiny, new safety signs for canoeists and swimmers. Sad to say, though, the Perspex cover of the information board had been wilfully smashed and scratched and the brochure box at the start of the nature trail was off its hinges. I saw this as an omen and decided not to continue to other reserves for fear of what I might find!

What is needed to prevent these acts of vandalism is more funding and more rangers, please.

Bush Backyard

Silver Banksia (*Banksia marginata*)

By Steven Katsineris

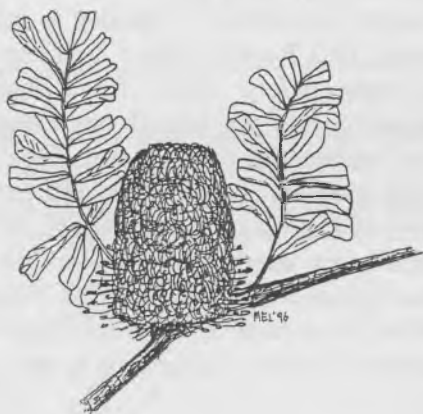
When we moved into our house, there were plenty of trees and some shrubs in the yard, but no Banksias among them.

As the Silver Banksia is indigenous to the region, hardy and one of my favourite native plants I brought three seedlings and planted them in various parts of the garden.

Recently I saw another two Silver Banksias for sale. They were cheap, as they were in rather poor condition, twisted and with some branches broken. I love to rescue such plants and try to get them to survive, so despite the risk I bought them. I planted them on an incline in a sunny position. These Banksias are now growing well; within a couple of months they had straightened up and have doubled in height. It of course gives me great pleasure to see them thriving.

Banksias were named after Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820). He was the first European to collect specimens of this plant. There are 75 Banksia species that naturally occur in the wild in Australia. One of the most commonly grown Banksias is the Silver Banksia. The name comes from the underside of the leaves, which are a silvery colour.

The Silver Banksia is a rounded dense shrub; with stiff, narrow, saw toothed green leaves. It is a variable species, which grows from 1metre to 10metres high and 1-5 metres wide. Generally most forms found around Melbourne and elsewhere do not exceed 5metres in height and 2 metres wide though. Silver Banksia is a hardy plant and will grow in a variety of soils and climates. It is fine in a range of positions, full sun or part sun, but grows best with good drainage.



Silver Banksia is tolerant of salt and lime and is frost tolerant. It is also fire retardant. Silver Banksia is suitable for coastal and inland positions. It is a useful plant for screening and as a windbreak. The flowers vary from greenish yellow to bright yellow. The flowers open from late summer to early winter. Older plants can be distinguished by their lovely crooked trunks and gnarled appearance.

Silver Banksia occurs in a wide range of habitats including coastal scrub, woodland, heathland and open forest. In the wild Silver Banksia is distributed throughout SA, Victoria, NSW, ACT and Tasmania.

Silver Banksias are excellent plants to draw native wildlife to your garden. The Silver Banksias flowers are rich in nectar and attract many birds, butterflies and small mammals to feed on them. It provides nest sites and food, seeds, nectar and insects for native birds. Honey-eaters use it as a source of nectar, especially in winter, while Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos and other large birds eat its seeds.

The Silver Banksia is a very hardy, easily grown shrub that will tolerate dry periods. With its strikingly beautiful and showy flowers and leathery leaves this is a wonderful addition to bush-like or formal garden.

Unusual Sighting

By Joan MacMahon

Today I was heading down Springvale Road to the Eastern Freeway when, just near the Donvale Living and Learning Centre (Melways 48 G1), I saw on my side of the road a pair of what I think were Crested Pigeons. I have only ever seen them north of Melbourne before.

Has anybody else seen them? Apparently they are expanding their range, which makes a great change from the more common scenario of threats and extinction.



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

The Eye of the High

By Pat Coupar

In summer, when the land is hot, the difference between land and ocean temperatures is greater than in winter. As hot air rises from the land it draws in the cooler air from the ocean causing a sea breeze. Where there is a large body of water, like a lake or inlet, the breeze becomes a wind. Consequently in summer, while early mornings can be calm, usually the wind gets up as the day progresses and the temperatures rises. This is how it is in Mallacoota.

In winter the difference between land and ocean temperatures are not so great. Whole days are often calm and windless, especially when a high pressure system is situated directly overhead. In a high pressure system (also called an anti-cyclone) the winds circulate in an anti-clockwise direction, whereas in a low pressure system they go the other way. Like all cyclones, the winds are strongest on the periphery and the air in the centre of the system is virtually still. This is called 'the eye'.

On June 24th we drove down to Mallacoota. Leaving grey wintry skies behind in our rear vision mirror, we headed towards a

band of pale blue sky on the horizon. By the time we arrived at Mallacoota there was not a cloud in the brilliant blue sky.

Our return after a month away is always special. After opening the blinds and unpacking we sank into the comfortable chairs to unwind, drinking in the view across the lake to the Howe Range wilderness, Gabo Island and the ocean. On this particular day the air was utterly still and the water so calm with just a slight humid haze on the horizon.

In this part of Mallacoota, away from the town, most of the houses are small, older-style buildings. Returning here is like travelling back in time, back to an era where the pace of life was more leisurely.

We feel this peace and serenity washing over us again and again every time we come back to our Shangri-La*.

However, weather systems are rarely static. Two days later a rapidly deepening low situated off the east coast of New South Wales intensified and moved steadily west bringing some of the worst floods to Gippsland in almost 100 years.

* *an earthly paradise, a place of retreat from the worries of modern civilisation.*

Source: The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.

Nine Plus Three Equals Heaps.

By Joan MacMahon

Heaps of plants in the ground! Arriving a bit before 10 am at the nursery (Thursday the 14th of June), I'm feeling pleased with myself for being a bit early, but I find the 'TAG' people have already left! (Is 9.30 the new 10?).

Didn't take me long to catch up as our site for the morning's activities is only a bit over a kilometre from the nursery. Halfway back along Pound Bend Road I turned right into Gallatlys Lane (who was Gallatly?) and then left into Boys Road (who was Boy?) and parked at the end, near the small white house. We're on a flat cleared area close to the river - it's delightful. I'd guess it was used for grazing or an orchard at some stage as it was covered in thistles and masses of weedy grasses.

The others had already dug heaps of holes and lots of plants were lying about waiting for someone to plant them. Jodie - one of the three rangers was doing a good job distributing the



plants while our members Ken, Martyn, Ray, Don, Brian, Noel, Lee and Grey were hard at it. The soil was so much better than we usually strike - so moist and friable. Heaven!

An hour or so later we had around 300 plants in and guarded (big rabbit problem). Mainly wattles: Blackwood, Silver, Black, Prickly Moses, Juniper plus Prickly Current-bush, Mat-rush, Tussock-grass and Hemp Bush. The upper storey of Candlebark and Swamp Gum is to be planted later.

All in all a very enjoyable and satisfying morning, especially since gentle rain arrived as we were finishing off.

The Diamantina

By Linda Rogan

Winter has hit Queensland, which means cold nights and some days where cold winds make 14 to 16 degrees feel even colder. We have only seen frost in Toowoomba so far.

Birds, especially those in Diamantina National Park, have been the highlights. Brolgas have been common browsing in long grass or flying overhead. White-winged fairy wrens are a striking contrast to our lovely blue ones in Victoria. Another black and white bird with a short tail in the Cumbungi at Border Bore had me intrigued until a photo showed it identical to the Willie Wagtails. We have called it a Willie Wagtailless.

Parrots have also provided some special moments for me. Small Corellas in their thousands flying into Green Tank joined Pelicans, three species of duck, cormorants, darters, and dotterels and while hundreds of Zebra Finches gave life to otherwise dead thickets. A large flock of Spinifex Pigeons fled into the grasses, their long feathered crests blending with the grass flowers, then they took flight with a high-pitched whirr. A young Whistling Kite watched it all from the tip of an old stag.

Here in Boulia the Cockatiels and Eastern Ringnecks are easily spotted.

One sighting stands out. On a chilly night at Gum Hole Campground, Diamantina National Park, a half moon cast shadows of the Coolabahs and River Rd Gums. At 3 am I stumbled out of a warm bed, threw a jacket over my nightshirt and carried a torch, responding to some sort of call of nature. About to return, I flashed the torch around

the open ground amongst the shrubs and froze when I saw two dark eyes staring my way. The creature, in turn, froze in the torchlight, giving me the chance to get a good look from as close a meter. What I saw was a bird with a very round profile, small parrot-like beak, and irregularly barred tail.

I passed on the details to the Diamantina Park Rangers, and later received a call from Andrew Leigh of Birds Australia. After discussion with Andrew, I believe it was most likely a Night Parrot. Since he has been regularly visiting Diamantina, most recently three weeks ago, on the lookout for this elusive bird, Andrew was quite interested. But I think he wondered whether or not it may have been an Owlet Nightjar which is certainly less rare.

On comparing the two birds in Pizzey's bird book, other than the color, I still think the parrot matches better. I don't suppose I will ever know for sure since I didn't have a camera on my nose. Anyway, it was an exciting sighting for me.



The elusive Night Parrot

People in Plants

By Shelagh Morton

Prostanthera walteri Monkey mint bush

Prostanthera walteri is one of the rare Highland mints that grow on the higher peaks of eastern Victoria. It was discovered by one of Baron Von Mueller's collectors, Carl Walter and named after him by Von Mueller.

Walter came to Australia from Germany in the late 1850's and became a successful photographer, recording amongst other things gold mining activities on the Yarra.

Photographs of the coffer dam on the Yarra in Warrandyte, with the first bridge in the background, show the tent of "C. Walter,

Photographer" in the foreground. Later in his life Walter lived in Yarra Street next to the present Folk Art.

Carl Walters most important work was his sympathetic series of images of life on the Corranderrk Aboriginal Station.

Our own

Prostanthera lasianthos flowered prolifically at Wombat Gully, Warrandyte North, last December, the creamy blossoms

giving out their strong perfume. I read that *P. walteri* is aromatic and has greenish flowers streaked with violet.



Over the garden fence and far away – communities' actions on weeds

A seminar presented by the Weed Society of Victoria

Selected Reports by Sue Bendel

Weed status in Victoria

Presented by Daniel Joubert, DPI, Frankston

Proclaimed noxious weeds are illegal to grow, and cause environmental and economic loss. Non-declared species include non-native, naturalised and invasive plants. There are about 1200 naturalised plant species in Victoria.

Alien plants that invade native vegetation are known as environmental weeds. Not all naturalised plants invade bushland. Some Australian plants have become weeds when they are grown out of their natural habitat.

Sleeper weeds are weeds that do not appear to have much impact at first, but then suddenly become a problem. Seventeen sleeper weeds were named which are not permitted into Australia because of the result of the AQIS Weed Risk Assessment system.

Weed Alert is a programme developed by the State Government to prevent entry of new weeds and eradicate emerging weeds.

Timing, reduction and tidiness – how to manage weedy situations

Presented by Graham Peterson, EcoRepair

There is a problem with weed eradication if woody weeds have been drilled and filled and then left to rot. Climbing weeds grow over them, and grassy weeds move in where there is more light. Begin weeding the best areas of bush, and follow up. Then move to adjacent areas, with follow up. Remove new weed invasions before they can spread. Prepare sites for revegetation and have follow up. Protect habitat for fauna.

Tackling environmental weeds in the home garden and the need for a strategic approach

Presented by Darcy Duggan, Bushland Management Services

Most weeds in bushland are garden escapes, with ready seed sources near by. To eliminate re-infection of bushland, near by residents need to control the environmental weeds found on their properties. The problem is these residents may not know the best way to tackle weed eradication.

However weeds such as blackberry and hawthorn should be removed in stages with revegetation occurring, as these weeds form habitat for small birds and animals. it should also

be noted if weeds are stabilising slopes or creek banks before removal.

When weeding a site it is important to assess the site and plan the work, implementing integrated control methods for weed management and monitoring and follow up maintenance.

When assessing a site, make a mud map of what is there including topographical and water, drainage features. Locate wanted vegetation and weeds. In the case of weeds note the lifecycle, for example seedling or seed bearing. Also note if weeds are in groups around a parent plant, or spread vegetatively.

Look at the site map and break the site down in to manageable parts and plan what to weed and when to do it. Consider the level of invasiveness such as spread by seed or vegetatively, whether it can disperse over long distances, and how competitive it is to establish. Have a five year plan to eradicate the weeds.

It is important to consider prevention of new emergent weeds by targeting them and removing them before they establish. It is also important to contain weeds by removing seed heads, or containing vegetative weeds at their edges. selectively remove and reduce the density of weeds to control them. Try and eradicate weeds but it may not be possible.

When developing the action plan, always work from the best areas to the worst and minimise soil disturbance as this encourages weeds. Understanding weed biology like Bulb exhaustion in weeds like Angled Onion and Soursob is useful. Give priority to weeds that are seeding, rather than saplings and seedlings which are less invasive. It is necessary to follow up a weeding programme, as no follow up spells failure. Leaving bare ground and not following up is a sure way to recruit more weeds. But follow up weeding helps to reduce the soil seed bank.





Market Volunteers

A big thank you to the following people who volunteered their time on the FOWSP trailer at the July Warrandyte market: Ray Kruger, Lynne Vary, Alan Woolcock, Tim Bedford, Marjan Kiewert, Marie and Wolfgang Krause.

The trailer was delivered and returned by Peter Curry.

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.

News from the Committee



Rangers Report:

- Conrad is now the Ranger in Charge for the next 12 months as Andy is going overseas
- New canoe signs have been placed at the launching ramps to advise of the different river levels
- It has been a successful rabbit program this year

Nursery Report:

- 14 people attended a planting at Boyes Rd. Apart from another planting the grant is now complete.
- Pound Bend planting for volunteer week in May had 11 people. Follow up on in June with Uni students will eventually lead to the removal of the pine bollards. More plantings planned.
- TAG visit to Kangaroo Ground Museum, historic Birch's Cottage and One Tree Hill was well attended. Thanks to Marg and Mick Wolwood.
- Cam lead a TAG that visited Hasties House (Alistair Knox designed) and Morrison's homestead site in the Yarra Valley.
- Thursday Activity Group (TAG) activities are running smoothly
- Tree guards have been removed from the Endeavour Bank Planting (thanks to Gray for organising)
- Thanks to all of the people who have helped on the events over the last couple of months.
- 2756 volunteer hours have been worked since 1 July 2006 by the Friends. This includes working bees with other groups, TAG mornings, Nursery and various other activities in WSP and YVP and both shires.

Land and Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change

Over the last 25 years the Friends group has made a significant contribution to helping Parks Victoria care for the ecosystems within the Park. This has given FOWSP an intimate knowledge of the Park and the many biodiversity issues that currently face the Park. We believe these issues will be exacerbated by the increasing threats from climate change.

FOWSP believes that more resources are needed for the Park: there are not enough staff or budget to manage the land they are responsible for sustainably – loss of biodiversity and the loss of threatened species is the result.

There is a lack of on ground support (ranger time) to work with FOWSP on the management plan, help apply for grants, implement and monitor projects - sometimes there are willing volunteers but the rangers have no time to support us, so some important projects are not done or the crucial seasonal time window passes.

There needs to be stronger acknowledgement and financial support for the Park as a producer of

ecosystem services. This is the valuable production of clean air, clean water, carbon sequestration, pollination services etc. If this was well understood the broader community would value bushland and see it as at least as valuable as agricultural land. So, fund the Park to properly tackle pest plants and animals and achieve a Net Gain of quality and extent of native vegetation. Pay land owners to maintain and improve native bush.

There is short term funding for 'one off' projects and these projects usually achieve their basic aims. However, they are usually without follow-up funding. So, over a period of a few years, the gains from the original project are lost and the original funding is wasted. When funding is given for projects, an ongoing residual amount should be considered for maintenance.

A healthy native bushland will improve the mental, physical and spiritual welfare of those who use it.

This is an edited version of the submission by FOWSP in response to DSE White Paper on Biodiversity. The full submission can be found on DSE website www.dse.vic.gov.au and follow the link to land and biodiversity at a time of climate change

Sandy Bay Picnic Area, Jumping Creek Reserve July 2007



Nobody told them the drought is over!



Does that include GST?

Computer Recycling

Do you have old computer equipment in your home or at work? There is a drop off centre - the Equipment Recycling Network - for computers and other electronic office equipment at 17 Greenwood Avenue, Ringwood, Melway 49H10 (entrance on your left just after Henry St.) Phone 9879 5211, fax 9879 6211, hours are 9am to 2pm Tuesday and Thursday.

It's run by around ten volunteers and any profit goes to Ringwood CFA, an animal aid group and three schools for disabled kids.

For a very reasonable price they can supply a computer to folk with disabilities.

WANTED: someone who knows a bit about office procedure to help out for a few hours each week.



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Grey Fantail

Grey Fantails are a common sight during winter teaming up with other small birds like thornbills and wrens. These 'mixed species feeding flocks' move through the bushland feeding cooperatively. The birds forage for insects in their own specialised niche. For instance the thornbills feed on the ground and fallen timber, sittellas and treecreepers spiral up and down large tree trunks while fantails chase aerial insects disturbed by the other birds.

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

FOWSP Membership Renewal Form

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Membership \$20

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