



WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Deep Winter Newsletter

Volume 42/four

July/August 2012

Warringal Conservation Society is a local, not-for-profit, community organisation caring for the environment in Banyule.

Formed in 1970, the Society is an active and productive steward of Banyule's environmental heritage.

Join us!!

Warringal Conservation Society is not just a local environment group: it is stimulating, fun and companionable and takes an active role in the wider community.

Single \$15,
Family \$20
Pension/student/
unemployed \$10
Life \$150

Articles and photographs for the newsletter are welcome. We may edit for legal, space or other reasons. Opinions expressed in articles are not necessarily those of the Warringal Conservation Society.

Newsletter printed courtesy of Jenny Macklin MP.

JULY MEETING

Mid Winter Soup Night

MIDWINTER MEETING – gather at 6.30pm for home-made soup and snacks before the Meeting which starts at 7.30 pm! Bring soup, bread or something else to share. ALL WELCOME.

Sustainability Initiatives in Banyule

Clayton Simpson is Banyules Climate Change/Resource Conservation officer. He will talk about ongoing projects and policy.

AUGUST MEETING

Freshwater Turtles of the Kimberley

Robert Bender is a WCS member and veteran of many Earthwatch projects. He will talk about an Earthwatch trip involving two weeks travelling along the Gibb River Road from Kununurra to Derby, and up to Mitchell River, snorkelling in streams to catch two species of freshwater turtle

**Meetings on first Thursday of the month
from 7.30 pm at the Old Shire Offices,
60 Beverley Road.**

**Enter from Buckingham Drive near the Banyule Theatre and
Greening Australia. Melways map 32:D3. All Welcome**

AT A GLANCE

July

Thursday 5th: Soup night starting 6.30pm followed by General Meeting 7.30pm - Clayton Simpson

Sunday 8th: Western Habitat Link Planting infill*

Sunday 29th: National Tree Day*

August

Thursday 2nd: General Meeting - Robert Bender - Turtles

Sunday 12th: New planting at the Habitat Link site Nth*

Sat 18th: Deadline for contributions to Sept/Oct Newsletter

*check <http://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety>

News & Events

Upcoming WCS activities

July 8th - Western Habitat Link Planting infill -

Planting understorey as a follow up from previous season

July 29th National Tree Day - Site and location to be announced..

August 12th - New planting at the Habitat Link site

Nth - A range of species to connect this area with habitat link and ephemeral wetland.

For updates see:

<http://www.facebook.com/WarringalConservationSociety>

WCS Website

The Society's website <http://www.warringal.org.au/> is up and running again after being out of action due to neglect and hackers. Contact details, several recent newsletters and links to our Facebook site are available. Thanks to Peter Deane for sorting this out.

Planting Report - June 17th Tawny Pond Planting

About 400 plants were put in at the small pond near the Somerset Rd Carpark. The site was prepared by burning the week before and plants included flax lillies (*Dianella*), sedges (*Carex*), grasses, Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*) and kidney weed (*Dichondra*). The pond

is referred to as Tawny Pond because Tawny Frogmouths are often seen in the area. We spotted a couple at the end of the planting. Thanks to Kylie from the Banyule Bush Crew for organising the site and plants.



Who we are and how to contact us

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Committee: John D'Aloia, Anthea Fleming, Celia Smith, Daphne Hards, Dianne Williamson, Marion Ware, James Deane.

News & Events cont.

Yarra Flats Park/Impressionist Laboratory Information Session, April 29th

Members of WCS went to the information session for more details and to voice their opposition for building and commercial operations in the Park. Two online surveys of the opinions of park users have now closed. Results are yet to be released.



Duck Shooting

There is good news following a six-day hearing in March in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court. Each of the five people, who were charged when rescuing waterbirds on wetlands near Kerang in northern Victoria during the final weekend of the 2011 duck shooting season, has been found guilty of only one charge out of five.

Proven charges included 'hindering' and operating noise producing equipment, being a whistle, in a manner likely to cause unreasonable inconvenience

or nuisance to any person contrary to the Wildlife (SGR) Regulations 2004. Rescuers were given undertakings (good behaviour bonds) without conviction.

Prosecution costs of approximately \$18,000 were sought by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), but refused. The Magistrate observed that the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) had not been even-handed in the laying of charges (with the DPI prosecuting). He indicated that the Department appeared to hold rescuers responsible for the provision of vets at the wetlands, when the Department itself should be responsible for the welfare of wildlife.

This case had to be fought - not only for the five rescuers charged, but for all future rescuers and people who want to see an end to the annual devastation of native water birds on Victoria's beautiful wetlands. The defending legal team has worked tirelessly and at a very low cost over the past 12 months to achieve this very good result.

About \$6000 is still needed however to cover all of the legal costs. Any donations to the **CADS Legal Fighting Fund** are very welcome. The address is: CADS Legal Fighting Fund, C/- PO Box 276, York Street Post Office, South Melbourne Vic. 3205 or by electronic bank transfer to - CADS Legal Fighting Fund BSB: 063-100 Account no: 10274738.

Celia Smith

May Speaker - Simon Branigan - Victorian National Parks Association's Marine and Coastal Campaign

The VNPA is the leading conservation organisation involved in marine and coastal conservation issues in Victoria. WCS members and the wider public may be aware of the major conservation gains the VNPA has achieved on land throughout our 60 year history (we're celebrating our 60th anniversary this year) – including a 30-year campaign to create Victoria's Alpine National Park, leading the 'Hands Off the Prom' campaign in the mid-1990s, and more recently the establishment of almost 100 000 hectares of new red gum parks.

But the huge contribution we have made to protecting Victoria's marine areas beyond the low tide mark is perhaps less well known.

Victoria's Spectacular Underwater World

Victoria is home to an incredible array of marine life and habitats, over 85% of the species in Southern waters being unique to the region. Our underwater world rivals the beauty of the Great Barrier Reef. Even Port Phillip Bay, right on the doorstep of Melbourne's CBD, has colourful deep-water sponge gardens, beautiful Gorgonian corals, seagrass meadows and rocky reefs. These habitats are home to fascinating animals like the dumpling squid, blue blubber sea jelly, pot-bellied sea horse, blue devil fish and Port Phillip's very own species of dolphin.

For a fish-eye view of our underwater wonders, without having to leave the comfort of your home, visit www.exploreunderwater.vnpa.org.au

In 2002, after over a hard-fought 10-year

Marine and Coastal Campaign cont.

campaign led by the VNPA and local community groups, the Government of the day, with cross-party support, established a world-first system of marine national parks and sanctuaries – which constitute 5.3% of state marine waters. These are fully protected ‘no-take’ areas, set aside to protect all plants and animals, and importantly also to provide areas for recreation, research and education.



*Pot-bellied
Seahorse at
Mount Eliza by
Kate Finley*



Dolphin in Port Phillip Bay by Jess Beckham

However, in the last 10 years there have been no major conservation initiatives, though pressures on the marine environment have continued to build. Pollution, invasive species, overfishing and coastal development are all impacting upon our marine environment, and these are further compounded by the growing impacts of climate change (eg sea level rise, storm surge and ocean acidification).

Marine Conservation Review

That’s why the VNPA stepped up to the mark and commissioned a leading science organisation to complete an in-depth review, based on the best available information, of Victoria’s critical marine habitats, values and threats. The review identified many major gaps in current marine reserve system – gaps in the boundaries of the current marine national parks and sanctuaries, and new areas.

The marine conservation review underpins our current marine campaign that is pushing for better management and protection for Victoria’s whole marine environment.

Westernport

The VNPA also works with local community groups on inappropriate coastal development issues. There are too many to list in this article, but a major one is the proposed expansion of the Port of Hasting in Westernport. We work closely with the Blue Wedges Coalition (I believe WCS is a signatory to their charter) and the Westernport and Peninsula Protection Council on this issue.

Although final expansion plans are still to be finalised, the Government has announced its aspiration to turn Westernport into a major international container shipping port.

For this to happen, we know there would have to be major dredging works in the existing channel and for a shipping turning circle, as well as extensive clearing of and damage to critically important fish and bird habitats such as mangroves and seagrass meadows. The increased shipping traffic would be a vector for marine invasive species and drastically heighten the risk of oil spills – which would be devastating for the bay’s Ramsar-listed wetlands.

Reef Watch

Another key element of our marine and coastal campaign work is the VNPA’s award- winning Reef Watch program, coordinated by Wendy Roberts. Run in partnership with Museum Victoria, Reef Watch engages volunteer divers and snorkellers in monitoring the health of Victoria’s marine environment and its species.

Reef Watch runs the annual Great Victoria Fish Count, happening again in November this year, as well as recently launching the ‘Buddy-up with a Blue Devil’ project.

More information and how you can help

To find out more about the VNPA and get involved in our marine and coastal campaign and other activities, visit www.vnpa.org.au. Check the ‘Publications’ page for useful resources like our recent new edition of *Life on the Rocky Shores*.

Plus, you can join our Facebook page for regular updates and environmental news.

And finally, to help the VNPA continue to take the lead in nature conservation in Victoria, please support our 60th Anniversary tax appeal! See our website for details, or phone 9347 5188.

*Simon Branigan
Marine & Coastal Project Officer*

June Speaker - Ray Gibson - Leadbeater's Possum and its Habitat

Ray Gibson from the Field Naturalists of Victoria presented a talk on Leadbeater's possum at our June meeting. Ray is from the Fauna survey group of the Field Naturalists and has been looking for possums for many years.

Leadbeater's possum is a small species that weighs about 70 grams and could fit in the palm of your hand. It was only known from five specimens collected prior to 1910. Not having been seen in the wild for over 50 years, it was assumed to be extinct until rediscovered by Eric Wilkinson near Marysville in 1961. Subsequent surveys found populations of Leadbeater's possum at several sites in the central highlands. It is the only mammal found just in Victoria, is our faunal emblem and is listed as endangered.



Leadbeater's possum - Friends of Leadbeater's <http://leadbeaters.org.au/>

Leadbeater's possum usually lives in Mountain Ash, Alpine Ash and Shining Gum Forest. It is largely insectivorous, with tree crickets being a favourite, and will also eat Acacia gum. It needs large hollow bearing trees to live in, either dead or alive, and a dense understory of wattles to move around from tree to tree. It is forever vigilant about being taken by owls and will not venture onto the ground. Fire is essential for regenerating the wattle understories that Leadbeater's needs to thrive, but large trees 150 years old or more need to remain to provide nesting hollows. Large dead trees (referred to as stags) will provide habitat for many years until

they rot and fall over. Many stags dating back to the bushfires of 1939 are reaching the end of their usefulness as nesting hollows. While bushfire regeneration provides habitat for Leadbeater's, the reduced numbers of possums in remaining suitable habitat does leave this species at risk of being wiped out by a fire. Around 40% of Leadbeater's habitat was lost in the 2009 bushfires.

Part of the reason that Leadbeater's is endangered is that regeneration after logging fails to replicate many of the elements necessary to generate habitat. Logging, burning and reseeded results in uniform regeneration, as opposed to patchier natural fire recovery. Logging frequencies are often in range of 80 years, while logged forest probably needs in the order of 150 years to become useful to Leadbeater's possum. Salvage logging after bushfire also reduces the value of regenerating forest as habitat by removing dead trees with nesting hollows.

Ray described how surveys for Leadbeater's possum were conducted by watching large hollow-bearing trees in the evening. Many animals are seen (mountain brush tail possums, greater gliders, ring tail possums, various gliders), but Leadbeater's can be distinguished by its size, behaviour and distinctive club shaped tail that is narrow at the base. Data was presented in terms of possums seen per potential nest tree. Spot lighting at night can also be used to find Leadbeater's possums. Survey data over many years suggests that populations are in decline, a situation that will not be helped on the short to medium term by the loss of much suitable habitat to fires in 2009. For this reason there is much concern about the logging of remaining suitable habitat in the Toolangi area.

Thanks to Ray for sharing his experiences and photographs. For more information on the Field Naturalist of Victoria and their activities see <http://www.fncv.org.au/>

James Deane

Sow stall awareness campaign

On Saturday 16 June 2012 I was involved in an awareness campaign held at Bourke Street Mall near the old post office, during lunchtime. The group is led by a team of 3, myself being one of them, and was created to engage with the public in order to raise their awareness around the cruelties associated with intensive farming of animals raised for food, as well as to provide education in order to make ethical and humane choices when choosing products



Sow stall awareness campaign cont.

derived from animals. This method of farming is referred to as factory farming.

Our focus was on stalls used to confine sows during their pregnancy, a common practice in Australian pig farms and of which approximately 300,000 sows endure at some stage of their pregnancy. A replica metal stall and sow was kindly lent to us by Animals Australia and approximately 50-60 campaigners participated, handing out flyers directing people to informative websites, holding up posters for the public to see the conditions sows are confined in and gathering signatures on a petition asking the Legislative Assembly of Victoria to ban the use of sow stalls immediately. A group of 10 campaigners also held up a compilation of 20 images showing the horrific conditions these sows endure, of which the rotation of each picture was synchronised to depict a unified display.

The day was a great success, with over 1,500 flyers being handed out to passers by, people stopping to engage in conversation and over 1,000 signatures gathered on the petition. One lady got off the tram mid journey just to sign the petition, others were brought to tears when bearing witness to the suffering thousands of sows endure every year in order to supply the pig meat industry.

The Code of Practice allows for sows to be confined in metal and concrete stalls for the whole duration of their 16 week pregnancy, a space no bigger than 2.2 metres in length, and 60cms in width. The sows cannot turn around, they can only stand up, move one step forward and one step backward. When they lie down, their legs protrude into the next stall, and into the neighbouring sow. Often, these stipulations are ignored and the sows' bodies touch the bars due to their large size.



Their bedding is only a cold and wet concrete floor of which they are not even given straw for bedding, the hard surface causes pain and sores to develop on their shoulders and knees. The extreme confinement causes frustration and boredom, leading the sows to develop neurotic behaviours called stereotypies, such as bar biting, tongue movements and air chewing. Sow stalls are used to reduce injury to the sow and thus reducing her risk of aborted piglets.

Then there is the farrowing crate, a space even smaller than the sow stalls, a measly 2 metres in length and 50cms in width. The sow is moved to the

farrowing crate about a week or so before she is due to give birth, and can be kept in this confinement for up to 6 weeks after the piglets are born. This is to stop her from crushing any of her babies, however, due to the extreme confinement she cannot nurture her babies.



The piglets are usually removed after 2 to 3 weeks, and the sow is impregnated again, usually artificially. Her hell continues until she is deemed no longer productive and is sent to slaughter.

Rather than allowing the pigs and sows to act their natural instincts, we allow them to be farmed in such intensive confinement that it literally drives them mad with frustration and boredom. The answer of which is not to relieve these things causing their hell, but to mutilate them so they can't cause as much damage to themselves or others by clipping their teeth, docking their tails and castrating them, all without the benefit of pain relief.

A simple measure that can be taken to reduce the cruelty in the pig industry and your unknowing contribution, is to force producers and suppliers to stop the use of sow stalls by choosing not to purchase pig meat derived from the use of sow stalls. You can also send emails or letters to big suppliers such as Coles and Woolworths, voicing your objection to the use of sow stalls. Coles have already announced the phase out of producers who use sow stalls and in their South Australian stores, they have already put this ban in place for their fresh pork meat. They are responding to consumer demand and opinion, so we need to keep the voice loud and clear.

Coles: <http://www.coles.com.au/Coles/Coles-Feedback.aspx>

Post: PO Box 2000, Glen Iris VIC 3146

Woolworths: <http://www.woolworths.com.au/wps/wcm/connect/website/woolworths/contact+us>

Post: PO Box 8000 Baulkham Hills NSW 2153

There will be many more campaigns conducted this year and as the weather improves. It is important for the public to know exactly how the meat that ends up on their plate was treated when it was once a live animal. No caring person would condone this cruel treatment.

In mid May 2012 the Tasmanian government announced it will ban sow stalls through legislation, effective mid 2014, this has been brought forward

Sow stall awareness campaign cont.

from the originally planned year of 2017. I can only think that this decision has been made due to pressure placed on it by consumers. Now is the time for the rest of the states to follow suit. Currently there is only a voluntary agreement in place led by industry, that sow stalls will be banned from 2017, let's make it mandatory via legislation, and fast track it. There is too much suffering that can't be ignored.

One has to ask, what is it that allows us as a society to deem this horrendous cruelty acceptable? How is it that we can allow animals raised for food to be treated this way, yet it is illegal to do exactly the same thing to animals fortunate enough to be labelled as pets, such as cats and dogs?

Remember, a compassionate world for animals begins with you. As consumers we have a responsibility to ensure animals are treated properly. One person's actions are better than none and you have the power to make real change for these vulnerable animals.

For more information & videos:

<http://www.savebabe.com>

<http://www.brightside.org.au/asp/content.asp?articleID=410>

Photos courtesy of Kylie Grinham and Animals Australia

Karina Leung

Nature Notes - Member's Observations

JUNE

Jane Crone observed a party of Brown Thornbills in her Grevilleas; also Silvereyes and Magpie-larks. She also saw Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos.

Celia Smith saw a party of 40 Black Cockatoos near Burke Road Bridge.

Diane Williams had a New Holland Honeyeater in her garden.

Anthea Fleming walked up the Darebin Creek near the Ring Road. In the East Thornbury Reserve, a small well-planted park designed as habitat for Growling Grass-frog, there were New Holland Honeyeaters, Noisy Miners, a Grey Shrike-thrush, and a Weebill which hovered in the foliage of a mighty old River Red Gum, as well as many Galahs and a Black-shouldered Kite over the sportsfields. Also among the Red-browed Finches and House Sparrows feeding on mown grassland, some Tree Sparrows were identified – a species which seems very uncommon these days.

Greg reported about 15 Red-rumped Parrots on the grassland near the Veneto Club in Bulleen.

He also raised the subject of trapping Common Mynahs. A concerted program in Canberra has reduced their numbers by two-thirds. Would it be worthwhile doing this in Melbourne?

Anthea Fleming commented that this was possible in Canberra, because Canberra is still a fairly small city and it is rather isolated. (Mynahs were deliberately introduced there by an ex-Sydney resident who missed

Warringal Conservation Society Annual Subscriptions Due by July 1st

Membership application/renewal (for July 2012-June 2013)

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Mobile:

Special area of interest:

Annual subscription type:

Single \$15

Family \$20

Concession (seniors, students etc) \$10

Life subscription \$150

Donations always welcome

**Please send this form and subscription (cheque or money order) to:
Warringal Conservation Society PO Box 64 Rosanna 3084 VIC
(Or come to our monthly meeting and see treasurer Daphne Hards)**

Nature Notes cont.

them.) Several people have bought traps and are catching Mynas and destroying them. Unfortunately the Mynah population in Melbourne is very high and Melbourne is now enormous, so there would always be more Mynahs available to spread into any recently cleared habitat. Traps could be worthwhile in areas where parrots and other hollow-nesting species are nesting; a sustained program could perhaps make Mynahs avoid the area.

The traps are basically galvanized cages on the lobster-pot principle – a bait of dry cat or dog-food (and water) is provided. Mynahs are bold and enterprising and will enter the trap quite readily. They can then be removed after dark and asphyxiated with the exhaust of a petrol-engine car (not diesel)– this works very fast and seems fairly humane. If free birds see you handling captives, they may have the sense to avoid the trap in future (this certainly applies to Ravens).

Mynahs fill nest-hollows with twigs and rubbish as nest-material; they also block up unused hollows anywhere near their nest – presumably to avoid nearby rivals. They are aggressive – a hollow in our old roof was successively occupied by House Sparrows, Starlings and Common Mynahs – each killed the previous occupiers' young. It would be very difficult to clear nest-hollows in large trees, but nest-boxes should be regularly checked and cleared. If you feed pets outdoors, leftover food should be taken inside immediately after, or you will be feeding Mynahs – and maybe also Rats and Foxes. Mynahs are extending their range along highways to country towns – following fast-food restaurants and untidy consumers. Fortunately they do not seem to find a living in bush away from houses and farmlands.

WHITE-WINGED CHOUGHs were reported on Sat. 16th June by Lynn Easton, a very competent observer, from a patch of woodland in “Cock's Paddock”, a location unknown to me, apparently between Rosanna Golfcourse and Westerfolds Park. This report appeared on the Internet *Eremaea - Birdline Victoria*. This is an unusual sighting of a species seldom seen in the suburbs. Worth looking out for on the Yarra Trail.

Anthea Fleming



Marbled Gecko found in Anthea Fleming's courtyard on 11th May. Barely 5 cm. long.

Would you like to receive your newsletter by email rather than a paper copy in the regular mail

Save paper and see the photos in colour. Contact the editors at james.deane@monash.edu.au

If not delivered return to: PO Box 64, Rosanna 3084



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