



WARRINGAL CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Late Summer Newsletter

Volume 43/two

March/April 2013

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.

MARCH MEETING

Understanding Fire and Fauna – it's not Rocket Science, it's More Complex Than That.

Fire is part of the Australian landscape. Prof Mike Clarke is interested in the impact of fire upon fauna. He studies the impact of fire in the mallee, the Box-Ironbark forests, the Central Highlands, and Wilsons Promontory. He also maintains an ongoing research interest in threatened species and threatening processes.

APRIL MEETING

Microbats

We don't often see small bats as they dash about after insects in the twilight and after dark - but they are very numerous and important in the ecosystem. Caroline Wilkinson is completing a Ph.D. at Melbourne University on Microbats, and will share a general overview and tell us about her research.

**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

March

Sunday 3rd: Clean Up Australia Day - Warringal Swamp (see news & events)

Thursday 7th: General Meeting - Fire and Fauna

April

Thursday 4th: General Meeting - Microbats

Sunday 7th: Warringal Swamp / Warringal Playground (see news & events)

News & Events

A Gong for John!

Anthea Fleming and Daphne Hards were delighted to be with Mary and Alex D'Aloia at The Centre, Ivanhoe on Australia Day to see our President being presented with his Jagajaga Australia Day Community Award by Jenny Macklin. John was nominated by the Committee for his passion for the environment and his commitment to Banyule and beyond. John has been a member for 20 years and our President for 12 years; and no one deserves this recognition more than him. Thank you and congratulations John.

WCS Nature Walk at Banyule Reserve

The society is conducting a nature walk in the vicinity of the Banyule Swamp on Saturday March 23rd at 8am, for approximately 2 hours. This event is planned to coincide with the Banyule Festival, and we hope to attract members of our community to engage with this special area. Members are welcome to come along, space permitting, and please follow the instructions below.

Venue: Banyule Flats Reserve, Somerset Drive, Heidelberg. MEL 32 F2

Date: Saturday March 23rd, 8-10am

Bring hats, water, and binoculars if you have them. Sensible shoes are recommended. As space is limited booking is essential: please ring Banyule Council on 9457 9816, or email our committee on warringal3084@gmail.com

Upcoming Plantings

March 3rd - Clean Up Australia Day - Warringal Swamp & Surrounds

Meet at Warringal Football Club oval car park Warringal Swamp & Pond and surrounding area (Beverley Rd Wetland, Sills Bend, etc)

April 7th - Warringal Swamp / Possible infill planting at Warringal Playground

Weeding, woody weeds, drilling & filling, cutting & painting, thistle removal. General site tidy up so we can start planning on working there more often.

Green Grocery Shopping in East Ivanhoe

We would like to remind you that when you shop at Foodworks in East Ivanhoe, your shopping points – or rather, 1% of your bill – can be swiftly donated to WCS at the check-out. So when you come off the Eastern Freeway at Burke Road North, track down McArthur Road for the weekly shop. This supermarket has had a recent facelift too! Thanks to all those who already have contributed.

National park boundary redrawn for resort

(The Age newspaper of February 21st)

The Baillieu government has redrawn the boundaries of the Alpine National Park to allow the Falls Creek resort to expand. Environment Minister Ryan Smith announced the government would excise almost 10 hectares of land from the national park and add it to the adjoining Falls Creek Alpine Resort area.

The boundary change follows numerous requests from the Falls Creek resort to expand its operations. The resort wants to develop non-winter tourism activities and a high-altitude training camp for athletes. The changes mean the resort will now be allowed to expand down to the shore of the Rock Valley Storage lake. Mr Smith said the proposed amendments were part of Baillieu government's plan to enable new "environmentally appropriate investments" on public land, including national parks, forests and alpine resorts.

Who we are and how to contact us

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Planting Coordinator: Heather Smith (standing in for Anthony Fernando)

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

Presidents Report - February 2013

Passing of Doug Western

We were all saddened to hear of the passing of our Founding President Doug Western. Doug was a gentle soul who was a true advocate for the wildlife and vegetation in Banyule. One of Doug's most beloved places was Banyule Flats, and many of his stories and films would highlight his passion for this place.

He was a humble man with a passion for wildlife, and his enthusiasm and drive enabled the establishment of the Warringal Conservation Society, and it has been going strong for over 40 years. We owe a great debt to Doug for his vision and foresight, and he will be sorely missed.

Duck Shooting Season for 2013

WCS has been informed by the Coalition Against Duck Shooting that despite threats posed to our native waterbirds by global warming, ravaging bushfires and extreme weather conditions, the Victorian government has called a 2013 recreational duck-shooting season, commencing the weekend of 16 March 2013.

The Coalition Against Duck Shooting is calling volunteers for both on-shore and off-shore jobs. If any members are interested in volunteering, you can join the duck rescue team at www.duck.org.au and attend one of the Information Meetings to be held at Kindness House, 288 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy at 7.00pm on Monday 25 February, Thursday 28 February or Tuesday 5 March.

Sustainable Living Festival

The Sustainable Living Festival starts this weekend until 24 February 2013. There are numerous activities planned all over Melbourne & Victoria. In order to peruse the activities in Banyule members should go to the Banyule Council website and click on the link. For those present there is a list of activities available in Banyule.

Flying Foxes & Fishing Hooks

The Victorian Advocates for Animals is calling for assistance from the community regarding the failure of the fisheries branch of the Department of Primary Industry to act to prevent The colony of flying fox at Yarra Bend from fishing lures and lines over a 300 metre stretch.

In a recent media release, Lawrence Pope said that the problem is that fishing in a 300 metre stretch of the Yarra in Yarra Bend Park is seeing bats, some only a few weeks old, hooked in the face and body. Others become tangled in fishing line and

hooks and sinkers. Fisher-persons cast out and hook bats that hang in trees over the river or leave line dangling from branches in which wildlife become entangled and die.

Animal advocates and wildlife rescuers simply want fishing excluded from this 300 metre stretch where the colony is located. This would save animals, decrease the workload on rescuers and rehabilitation workers, and have fewer traumatised members of the public. There is no downside to excluding fishing from this small area. At most, it would entail a 150 metre walk to fish safely.

In spite of numerous photos sent to DPI they will not act. The grey headed flying fox is listed as a keystone species under Victoria's *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, *the Wildlife Act 1977*, and *the EPBC Act 1999*.

The Society will be drafting a letter to support Vic Advocates for Animals in relation to this matter. If any members wants to send a letter, please speak to Celia Smith.

Flying Foxes & Backyard Fruit Tree Netting

The Victorian Advocates for Animals are still constantly dealing with issues revolving around backyard fruit tree netting in Victoria.

Wildlife safe netting (Hailguard) and 'fruit socks' are sold at Bunnings for domestic backyards. The burden ('impost') on carers and wildlife is unnecessary and unacceptable. The burden on keystone species like flying foxes is also unacceptable., and the Victorian Advocates for Animals argue that wildlife safe netting and wildlife safe products should be the only type allowable in Victoria backyards.

The task of persuading every retailer and wholesaler of netting to sell only wildlife safe netting is impossible. Only sensible regulations will do the trick.

The Society will be drafting a letter to the minister for environment and climate change Ryan Smith seeking a prohibition on unsafe netting in backyards.

If any members wants to send a letter, they should address it to:

ryan.smith@parliament.vic.gov.au
Ministerial Office

Address Level 17, 8 Nicholson Street,
Melbourne, VIC

Phone (03) 9637 8890

Any further queries can be made to Celia Smith.

Presidents Report cont.

WCS Planting Coordinator

As members may be aware, our planting Coordinator, Anthony Fernando will be travelling overseas and will be unable to undertake the role of Planting Coordinator. I am very pleased to say that Heather Smith has eagerly volunteered to be our Planting Coordinator, and some members have already received notification of our first working bee this Sunday.

WCS and the Banyule Festival

It has been decided that WCS will conduct a Nature walk around Banyule Flats and surrounds as part of its contribution to the Banyule Festival. Places are limited. If members are interested, they should book a place.

WCS Adviser Group

As members were previously advised in November 2011, there was consideration of the formation of a WCS Adviser group. This group would comprise

senior members of WCS that the WCS Committee could seek advice on particular issues from those with particular expertise. It was also considered that it was an opportunity for some members that are not able to be on committee but willing to serve the Society in another capacity.

I am now pleased to advise that the following people have been requested and agreed to be part of our Adviser Group:

George Paras	Carol Smith
Denise & Anthony Fernando	Kath Johnson
John Merory	Jane Crone
Beryl Jarman	Robert Bender
Geoff Baker	Dorothy Davies
Xenia Dennett	Don Stokes

John D'Aloia, WCS President

February Speaker - Karen Rawady - Wild Sea Precinct at the Zoo

Karen works at the Melbourne Zoo where she is involved in landscaping, planting and planning enclosures. She spoke about the Wild Sea precinct which opened December 2009.

This area began its life in the 1930s as a monkey enclosure on an island surrounded by a moat. The moat later became a home to fur seals and the monkey enclosure was removed to give the seals more space. The pool in this seal enclosure was not really large enough and leaked. The Little Penguins were also in need of updated accommodation.

The Wild Sea project centered around a new area with deeper pools with waves for the seals and penguins, and facilities to display fish including sharks and rays. Landscaping and plantings were designed to represent a range of coastal environments. Plant communities recreated include dunes, coastal heath and wetland.

Earthworks for this project were substantial and in the process some established banksias were dug out of the ground and kept in the zoo's plant nursery. The construction of the new pools and buildings, and installation of water treatment equipment then got underway. At the same time the types and numbers of plants required were calculated and lots of tube stock purchased for growing on. This project ran to a tight schedule and the seals needed to be temporarily housed elsewhere while it was happening. The seals are one of the Zoos most popular exhibits and it was

important to get them back out without delay.

When construction had finished, the area was planted to give it a coastal feel and paths were created guide visitors. Part of an old pier was salvaged and reconstructed on site. A whale bone feature was created. The banksias that were removed from the original enclosure did well when replanted. Some of the dune areas did not fare as well and were trampled as visitors created shortcuts. Managing the smooth flow of the visiting public was recurring theme. In some cases, coastal look fencing was installed to give the plants a chance to establish with good results.



A dune area with some minimalist fences to allow plants to get established. The reconstructed pier is in the background to the left.

Wild Sea cont.



A whale rib feature in on of the sand dune plantings



A seal enjoying the new pool



Wetland with pelicans



Penguins



Grass and Correa



Wild flowers

How do the animals like their new homes? The seals apparently like the extra space and the window in the side of the pool where they can view humans. The penguins on the other hand were slightly overwhelmed by their larger pool.

Karen also spoke about conservation initiatives organized by the Zoo including the Wipe for Wildlife campaign. This project is championed by a its own super hero called CrapMan, and encourages

people to save forest habitat by using 100% recycled toilet paper. The state government recently asked the Zoo to pull this campaign because its message doesn't fit with their timber industry action plan!

For more details on the Melbourne Zoo:

<http://www.zoo.org.au/melbourne>

James Deane

Flying Foxes threatened by fishing at Yarra Bend

These photos were taken recently at the listed grey headed flying fox colony in Yarra Bend in Kew. They are two of many photos that show the shocking cruelty caused by fishing here, a 300 metre stretch of the Yarra, where Melbourne's unique colony of endangered flying foxes nests.

The problem occurs when people cast lines out and hook animals that hang in trees over the river, or when people leave hooks and lines dangling from branches. Grey headed flying foxes leave their colony at dusk and fly low in search of water and food. When doing this they are hooked through the face and body by littered fishing lines and lures, or they get entangled in lines, hooks, and sinkers. The grey headed flying fox is listed as a keystone species under Victoria's Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, the Wildlife Act 1977, and the EPBC Act 1999. The Department of Primary Industries/ Department of Sustainability and Environment has a legal responsibility to protect them.

Wildlife volunteers and advocates are calling for a ban on fishing along a small area of the Yarra River, where the colony is located on a stretch of about 300 metres, to protect these vulnerable



1. *A flying fox hooked deeply.*
2. *A flying fox hooked and hanging from a lure*

animals. The only disadvantage to excluding fishing from this small area is an extra 150 metre walk to another fishing spot.

Members concerned about fishing and flying foxes are now urged to ring and write to the media and to lobby Peter Walsh, the Agriculture Minister: peter.walsh@parliament.vic.gov.au.

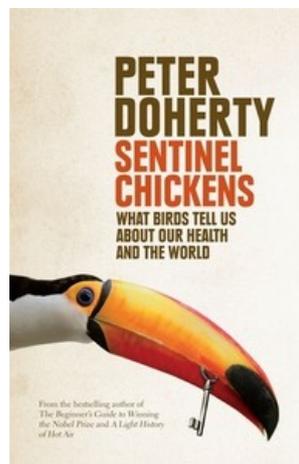
Celia Smith

Book Review

Sentinel Chickens by Peter Doherty

Peter Doherty is an Australian immunologist who won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1996. I heard him talking about birds late last year on 3RRR radio station and was impressed by his knowledge and engaging style (Immunologists usually speak in dry technical language peppered with acronyms). He explained that although birds had featured heavily in the work he had done, now he had a bit more time to marvel at amazing diversity of birds and ponder our complex relationships with them. He pointed out that birds are the only wildlife most of us see on a daily basis and that they can tell us a great deal about the world. We ignore them at our own peril.

The title of his book "Sentinel Chicken" refers to the use of strategically placed flocks of chickens to monitor the spread of viruses. This topic relates to Doherty's professional career studying viruses. The



role of domestic and wild birds in the spread of viruses and the use of chicken eggs in the study of viruses and pathogens are discussed. Also covered are details of bird biology and behavior, and accounts of the effects that humans have on birds. The American Passenger Pigeon was possibly once the most abundant bird in the world, and the story of its extinction in 1914 through trapping and shooting is a timely reminder of devastation humans can cause. The poisoning of Indian Vultures by voltaren administered to cattle is an example of an unanticipated effect that was deadly for the birds, but also led to a dramatic increase in wild dog populations and human fatalities caused by rabies. Other fascinating accounts in this book illustrate how the lives of birds and humans are unexpectedly but inextricably entwined.

Doherty also notes that, unlike many areas of science that are inaccessible to non-scientists, observing birds is an area where dedicated amateurs make an invaluable contribution to scientific knowledge. All you need to do is to buy a good pair of binoculars and join the local chapter of Birdlife Australia.

James Deane

Banyule Flats - February 2013

As our very dry summer continues - eleven weeks almost without rain, apart from a shower at the end of January – the effect on Banyule Swamp has been continuing evaporation. The water gets shallower and the muddy margins get wider – the row of dead trees are now well clear of the water and numerous mud-banks are exposed. So are the humps formed by the roots of tussocks of dead Water Ribbon plants. The water level has also fallen in the Billabong, but there is still fairly deep water at the former Hide Site. As other water bodies in Victoria dry out, any remaining water attracts many water-birds, and Banyule Swamp has attracted plenty.

A solitary Great Egret has been about for most of the summer, but on 2nd Feb, Richard Loyn told me that a Little Egret had arrived – it was following four Yellow-billed Spoonbills about, darting to catch any water-life they disturbed. Australasian Grebes (mainly young birds) were swimming. A Little Black Cormorant sat on a post and a Great Cormorant was in the dead tree, with a White Ibis. On the mud-flats were Black-fronted and Red-kneed Dotterels and two Masked Lapwings. We were able to count about 10 Latham's Snipe. The resident pair of Black-winged Stilts were feeding in the shallows. Lynn Easton pointed out a Sacred Kingfisher on the west side which appeared to be digging in exposed sand – later it flew to a post. Chestnut and Grey Teal were quite numerous, but few Black Ducks were seen. I was pleased to find that the Windmill Track east of the Billabong had been mown, presumably as a fire-break. Flocks of Silvereyes and Goldfinches were about and I saw a White-faced Heron in the Billabong, with some Coots and Dusky Moorhens.

On Monday 4th February, Richard Loyn reported



Low water at the Swamp

a Royal Spoonbill and a rare visitor, a Freckled Duck on 'Birdline Victoria' – with a photo. Needless to say, when I went to look next day, it had departed.

By Sunday 10th Feb., there had been a little light



A juvenile Little Egret supervises Spoonbills 2nd February 2013

Banyule Flats - February 2013 cont

rain overnight – run-off had filled up the Grotty Pond, so there was no chance of seeing any of the Crakes which have been visible there this season, only a single Buff-banded Rail. At the Swamp was only one Yellow-billed Spoonbill; I counted 6 or 8 Snipe and 42 Wood Ducks at the north end. My attempt to count the Dotterels was interrupted by the arrival of two large Eastern Grey Kangaroos, which moved slowly along the west edge towards the north end, before disappearing into the Northern Paddock. I took several photos and then was distracted again by the arrival of a Great Egret flying overhead. It descended quite abruptly, turning its wings almost vertically, first to left, then to right, straightened out and glided in to land in the water. At the Billabong I found the Royal Spoonbill feeding with a White Ibis. Along the Windmill Track, there was a mixed-species feeding flock among the Black Wattles and fruiting Tree Violets. Silvereyes fed on the berries, immature Goldfinches perched on the wattle tops, and I also saw Red-browed Finches, a Blackbird, a New Holland Honeyeater, Grey Fantails, and two immature Mistletoebirds. I heard a Grey Shrike-thrush nearby and identified a young Golden Whistler. The most unusual birds were a small party of Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, probably passage migrants on their travels northward.

On the 15th, a Long-necked Turtle was sunning itself on a dead tussock in the Swamp. I counted seven Snipe, six Black-fronted Dotterels and two Red-kneed, plus 37 Chestnut Teal; the Grey Teal seemed to have gone. The Grebes were present with two White-faced Herons. By now the water had receded to leave the old fence-posts out of the water. No Coots or Moorhens were to be seen. On the

Windmill Track I saw two Crimson Rosellas. Chestnut Teal and Dusky Moorhens were on the Billabong, with a pair of adult Australasian Grebes. I saw a large European Carp twice jump clear of the water.

On Thursday 21st February, I photographed two Rainbow Lorikeets fighting fiercely while hanging suspended from a twig of Spotted Gum. More aggression at the Grotty Pond, where one Buff-banded Rail was chasing two others about - perhaps it's time for young birds to leave home? Musk Lorikeets were feeding on lerp in a Eucalypt by the path. As I walked down to the Swamp, I saw two Yellow-billed Spoonbills fly away from it, and there was a Great Egret visible from the path. At the Swamp I met Xenia Dennett and a friend from WA – they had hoped to see Snipe, but there were none to see. Perhaps migration back to Japan has called already. A party of 6 Red-rumped Parrots alighted on one of the dead tussocks to drink. The Dotterels, Stilts and 42 Chestnut Teal were still present. A group of Coots were feeding on the dry mud, with some Wood Ducks. At the Billabong, the Royal Spoonbill was feeding – unfortunately behind a fallen tree, so no photo – and as I watched, a White-necked Heron arrived. I tried to sneak along the bank in hopes of a picture, but too many thistles, so I followed what looked like a wombat pad – suddenly there were two thuds and a Swamp Wallaby appeared for a moment, almost horizontal above the weeds in a 'low-flying' attitude! It raced away along the Billabong margin to find cover elsewhere. I was sorry for the disturbance, but glad to have seen it.

Anthea Fleming



The swamp at sunset

Nature Notes - Member's Observations

February Meeting

Kath Johnson reports a Little Wattlebird in her garden at Macleod – where they are unusual.

Denise Fernando reported the recent return of Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes in Macleod.

Lene Jakobsen saw a flock of 40 Red-rumped Parrots in the Dog Exercise Paddock at Banyule Flats.

Don Stokes had seen Little Black Cormorants, Buff-banded Rail, Stilts, Ibis and Snipe at Banyule Swamp.

Beryl Jarman had a Tawny Frogmouth land on her back veranda rail.

Anthea Fleming showed some recent photographs of birds from Banyule Flats, including the mating behaviour of Common Bronzewing, and some birds from Mill Park Lakes.

James Deane saw Yellow-billed and Royal Spoonbills at Banyule Swamp and Beverley Rd Swamp, and dead carp at Banyule Swamp.

Robert Bender showed some photos taken with a new macro lens – a triangular leaf-hopper, a shield bug found feeding on White Elderberry at Horseshoe Bend, a Black Bess Beetle found in decaying wood, Wolf Spider, Enamel Spider, and jumping spiders. He also showed a picture of an unusual Pobblebonk Frog found on a recent working-bee at Horseshoe Bend, Wilson Reserve. It was leucistic – white with a few black marks; the eyes were of normal colour.



Anthea Fleming.

Leucistic Pobblebonk - Wilson Reserve

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

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